

Transcript of the Testimony of

Date: January 16, 2018

Case: NEAR SOUTH COMMUNITY MEETING NO. 2 -
PROPOSED REASSIGNMENT BOUNDARY CHANGE OF
NATIONAL TEACHERS ACADEMY

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Page 1

CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

NEAR SOUTH COMMUNITY MEETING #2
PROPOSED REASSIGNMENT BOUNDARY CHANGE OF
NATIONAL TEACHERS ACADEMY

January 16, 2018
6:00 p.m.

Second Presbyterian Church
1936 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois

1 CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS ADMINISTRATION:

2 HERALD "CHIP" JOHNSON, Family and Community
Engagement in Education;

3 SHANI BOONE, Office of Diverse Learning and
4 Supports Services;

5 LUIS RODRIGUEZ, Office of Diverse Learning and
Supports Services;

6 ONSHELLE BLACKMON, Students in Temporary Living
7 Situations;

8 TIFFANY TAYLOR, Talent Office.
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1 MR. JOHNSON: I'd like to introduce
2 myself. I'm no stranger to these meetings. I
3 am Chip Johnson, chief officer of Family and
4 Community Engagement in education.

5 This meeting is part of the
6 proposed reassignment boundary of National
7 Teachers Academy, which was formally introduced
8 on December 1st. I will say formally proposed
9 to the Board on December 1st following months
10 of community engagement leading up to the
11 announcement.

12 We are here today on behalf of
13 the CEO, Dr. Janice Jackson, to share some
14 basic information and to hear from you about
15 the specific proposal.

16 As I mentioned a moment ago, the
17 purpose of this meeting is to allow CEO Jackson
18 and the board to hear feedback from you about
19 the specific proposal under discussion.

20 I will start by reading a brief
21 introduction on logistics, and then I will run
22 through the presentation that you might have
23 seen last week if you were here.

24 After this, we will allow you

1 time for you and the public comment.

2 The meeting will end
3 approximately 8:00 o'clock promptly. I'm
4 hoping that will be 8:00 o'clock. And then I
5 would also like to encourage you -- Reverend
6 Neff cannot be here. He was going to be here
7 to introduce himself to you and to welcome you
8 into his church, but he did want to express
9 that he wanted to maintain the fidelity of this
10 being a worship church service. If we can
11 agree to disagree and just keep our language
12 very respectful during our public comment, that
13 will be very much appreciated.

14 In addition, today we have
15 representatives from the Office of Diverse
16 Learning and Supports Services, Shani Boone and
17 Luis Rodriguez. Students Living in Temporary
18 Situations, STLS program, Onshelle Blackmon.
19 And then from the Talent Department, we have
20 Tiffany Taylor being represented here.

21 They will be available for 30
22 minutes after this meeting to answer any
23 questions that you may have specific to this
24 proposal.

1 And please note that the
2 conversations at those tables will not be
3 recorded.

4 We do have a stenographer here
5 that is taking notes to present a public record
6 for all comments made in tonight's meeting.

7 The community meeting will take
8 place over a course of two hours, and then I
9 will provide a brief presentation of proposed
10 action followed by public comment.

11 If you did not have a chance to
12 comment, you may fill out the card in the back
13 or e-mail your comments to CPS -- I'm sorry,
14 transitions@cps.edu. You can also submit your
15 written comments at the registration desk where
16 a staff member has note cards that they will
17 provide for you. Please reference the
18 transition plan regarding the school action at
19 the website cps.edu/transitions.

20 In addition, meeting summaries
21 for each community meeting will be made
22 available online at cps.edu/transitions within
23 five days of the meeting.

24 This meeting is part of a broader

1 timeline regarding the proposed actions. As
2 part of this process, CPS began publishing
3 draft guidelines for school actions on October
4 1st and then announcing proposed school actions
5 on December 1st. This followed most of
6 community engagement and input.

7 Following this announcement, CPS
8 hosted two community meetings, this is the
9 second one, and then one public hearing that
10 will be held at the end of this month,
11 together, additional public feedback.

12 After these meetings and the
13 hearings, we will review all input.

14 And after this, CEO Dr. Jackson
15 will make a recommendation to the board to vote
16 on the proposed action.

17 Following the potential
18 recommendation, the board will vote on whether
19 or not to approve the proposed action at the
20 February board meeting.

21 Over the past week, we have
22 engaged various communities on this proposal
23 and got feedback that formed adjustments to the
24 proposal. We heard from various communities,

1 including parents and community members at
2 Drake, Haines, Healy, NTA, South Loop and Ward.
3 We heard from community members from Armour
4 Square, Bronzeville, Bridgeport, Chinatown and
5 South Loop. And also heard from our aldermen
6 and our state representatives.

7 We have conducted three large
8 community meetings between May and June of
9 2017. We had five meetings with the steering
10 committee comprised of community leaders across
11 these groups. Over 30 small-group meetings
12 with various stakeholders and received over 900
13 e-mails at transitions@CPS.edu.

14 From this engagement, we had a
15 lot of feedback from various perspectives,
16 including those interested in a high school and
17 potential boundaries, as well as others who
18 want to maintain NTA as an elementary school,
19 including its strong culture and staff.

20 We have worked to adjust our
21 proposal in response to various points of
22 feedback, including expanding South Loop to
23 incorporate all of NTA's current boundary and
24 releasing an initial draft boundary for

1 community feedback.

2 We want to take time to explain
3 the proposal today and where it stands and
4 continue to gather feedback from these
5 community meetings.

6 In terms of the proposal, itself,
7 all proposed changes are supposed to begin
8 school year 2019-20. There are two key
9 components here. On the elementary school
10 side, this proposal involves a new
11 state-of-the-art South Loop facility,
12 three-campus model at South Loop and expanding
13 boundaries of South Loop to incorporate all of
14 NTA's current boundary over time.

15 On the potential high school
16 conversion, this proposal involves NTA, rather
17 than converting to a high school over time,
18 transitioning grades pre-K through 3 to South
19 Loop while allowing students in grades 4
20 through 8th grade to remain at NTA or transfer
21 to South Loop and provide a guaranteed seat for
22 all NTA students to attend the high school,
23 regardless of where they live.

24 In the following slides, we will

1 go through a few key details of this proposal.

2 In terms of the high school
3 conversion timeline, this proposal involves the
4 following changes for 2019-20: Transition of
5 pre-K program at NTA to South Loop; enrolling
6 incoming kindergarten students at South Loop;
7 rising students in grade 1st through 3rd grade
8 will be reassigned to South Loop or have the
9 option to transfer to another school; NTA
10 students in grade 4 through 8th grade to either
11 stay at NTA or to transition to South Loop.

12 All NTA students will have a
13 guaranteed seat at the high school regardless
14 of where they live.

15 Starting in school year 2019-20,
16 NTA will begin a gradual conversion to a high
17 school over time.

18 As you can see below, NTA would
19 contain students 4 through 9 in 2019-20. And
20 then in subsequent years, NTA would gradually
21 phase in high school grades while phasing out
22 the elementary school grades.

23 So by 2022-23 school year, NTA
24 would contain students in grades 7 through 12.

1 And in school year 2024 through 25 and beyond,
2 NTA would only contain the high school grades 9
3 through 12.

4 We will ensure that the high
5 school and elementary grade transitions will be
6 managed with the appropriate safety and
7 security considerations.

8 In terms of the transition for
9 specific NTA students, starting in 2019-20, the
10 pre-K program at NTA will be located in South
11 Loop.

12 For students in the neighborhood
13 program, rising kindergarten students living in
14 the current boundaries of NTA will not offer
15 kin -- I'm sorry. In the current boundaries of
16 NTA, will be zoned to South Loop. NTA will not
17 offer a kindergarten option.

18 Rising 1st through 3rd grade
19 students at NTA will be reassigned to South
20 Loop regardless of where they live. They will
21 also have the option to transfer to other
22 elementary schools. Staff from the Office of
23 Access and Enrollment will help students and
24 families if they wish to explore other options.

1 Rising 4th through 8th grade
2 students can stay at NTA through graduation or
3 transfer to South Loop's neighborhood track.
4 They can also decide to transfer to South Loop
5 in subsequent school years.

6 For students in the regional
7 gifted center program, which we eventually
8 refer to as RGC, kindergarten through 3rd grade
9 will be located at South Loop. In subsequent
10 years, the RGC program will phase in grades at
11 South Loop.

12 Rising NTA RGC students will be
13 reassigned to the RGC program at South Loop.
14 They will also have the option to transfer to
15 other elementary schools.

16 Staff at the Office of Access and
17 Enrollment will help students and families
18 again if they wish to explore other options.

19 The RGC program for grades 4
20 through 8 will remain at NTA and phase out over
21 time. They would also have the option to
22 transfer in to South Loop neighborhood track in
23 school year 2019-20 and in future years.

24 In terms of how the elementary

1 school boundary will change, South Loop's
2 boundary will expand to include all of NTA's
3 current boundary over time. This boundary
4 change over time is in sequence with the
5 transition of elementary school students and
6 the phaseout of elementary school grades at
7 NTA.

8 So, for example, in school year
9 2019-20, kindergarten through 3rd grade at NTA
10 transitions to South Loop; and likewise, the
11 boundary for kindergarten through 3rd grade
12 students in NTA's current boundary will be in
13 South Loop.

14 (Interruption by audience)

15 (Audience chanting.)

16 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you very much.
17 Kindergarten through 3rd grade at NTA
18 transitions to South Loop; and likewise, the
19 boundary for kindergarten through 3rd grade
20 students in NTA's current boundary will be
21 South Loop.

22 NTA will offer grades 4 through
23 8, so boundaries for students -- excuse me. I
24 understand your passion, and I understand your

1 need, but there are other people that want to
2 listen to the proposal. There are other people
3 that have the same passion as you do and have
4 some choices they need to make. I ask you
5 respect the equity of the presentation. Thank
6 you.

7 (Audience shouting)

8 NTA will offer grades 4 through
9 8, so the boundaries for students in grades 4
10 through 8's NTA boundary will still be NTA.

11 All students residing in this
12 boundary in grades 4 through 8 will also have
13 the option to attend South Loop Elementary
14 School.

15 We recognize that this change
16 will be difficult for some families and
17 students. We engaged both NTA and South
18 Loop --

19 (Shouting by audience.)

20 MR. JOHNSON: We engaged both NTA and
21 South Loop parents in developing this
22 transition plan, including multiple steering
23 committees.

24 Ultimately, we developed a draft

1 plan that budgets 3.5 million to support that
2 transition of NTA students to South Loop and
3 the coming together of these two school
4 communities.

5 Some of the key transitions that
6 we included were: The budget for variety and
7 events activities designed to support the
8 community building and culture integration
9 starting the year prior to any proposed
10 actions.

11 Another one was the creation of a
12 Joint Culture and Climate Team comprised of
13 staff, parents and student representatives from
14 both NTA and South Loop.

15 Then the principal and
16 school-based transition coordinators to assist
17 with implementation of new programs and
18 practices at each school. We would also
19 provide logistical support, examples are
20 recording transfers and the like, and the other
21 supports identified by both schools'
22 leadership.

23 Implementation of restorative
24 practices: Professional development and

1 training opportunities for all school staff and
2 transportation for transferring NTA students to
3 commute to South Loop Elementary School.

4 In addition, as part of this
5 proposal, all NTA students as of school year
6 2018-19, regardless of where they live, will
7 have a guaranteed seat at the high school as
8 they matriculate from elementary school to high
9 school.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You might be loud,
11 but you ain't making any sense.

12 MR. JOHNSON: That's your opinion.

13 The slide that you see here,
14 regarding the feedback from the last meeting
15 regarding capacity and enrollment in the high
16 school, the data shows that under a reasonable
17 set of assumptions based on current data, all
18 students from the enrollment boundary,
19 including both neighborhood and preference
20 boundary, will be able to attend.

21 Now, before we get started, each
22 participant will have two minutes to speak.
23 You will receive notice with 30 seconds left at
24 the two-minute mark.

1 Can I see where the timekeepers
2 are? Timekeepers, raise your hands. A
3 stenographer and note-taker are present to
4 report comments --

5 (Audience shouting.)

6 MR. JOHNSON: -- meeting and ensure CPS
7 fully captures community feedback.

8 (Audience chanting "Black Lives Matter")

9 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

10 We would like to begin our public
11 comment section.

12 Once again, I'm going to say for
13 the sake of the Chicago Public Schools, that
14 you try to maintain respect.

15 Will speakers one through five
16 please line up. Speakers one through five. I
17 hope to continue the remarks over the
18 disrespect. Speakers one through five, please.

19 (Audience shouting.)

20 MR. JOHNSON: Speakers one through five.
21 If I don't have one through five, I will take
22 six through ten. One through ten, please.

23 You will be able to speak from
24 the microphone here on this side, and then you

1 will be able -- we're going to use one
2 microphone. You will be able to speak on this
3 mic here.

4 All of our speakers, we'll
5 have -- thank you very much. I appreciate it.
6 I'm going to still be respectful. We're going
7 to have speakers one through ten at the back.
8 Our first speaker.

9 MS. WILSON: Good evening. My name is
10 Brittany Wilson. I am speaking on behalf of
11 (inaudible). We are part of the agency
12 development. They will be excited to be within
13 the boundary of the near south proposal, as
14 education, as you know, today is most
15 important.

16 This will give families positive
17 education selection for their children in their
18 own community. Thank you.

19 MR. JOHNSON: Second speaker.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I am a proud parent
21 of two NTA scholars. My son is in third grade.
22 My daughter kindergarten. I've attended all
23 the community meetings. This is the first time
24 I have come to speak.

1 My purpose for doing so is to
2 address some of the comments that had been made
3 from outside communities.

4 My children have ridden two
5 trains with their father every single day since
6 they were in kindergarten.

7 At the last meeting, someone
8 asked us if we have been south of 37th Street.
9 We live in the hundreds. The Red Line stops
10 directly in front of NTA. And amazingly, they
11 have not had a single tardy with public
12 transportation.

13 I would also like to add, they
14 travel 13 miles to school, that's 13. And I
15 know that math is hard for some of you, so
16 that's 26 miles round trip. I drive them home
17 during rush hour every day.

18 So when I hear stories how hard
19 it is for someone's high schooler to travel
20 four, six or eight miles, I'm not buying that
21 as a reason to destroy 750 people's children
22 for a high-quality education.

23 Under the new plan, my son can
24 stay at NTA in a construction zone, my daughter

1 gets put into South Loop, and my
2 two-year-year-old wouldn't have a seat at
3 either one.

4 We will become one of those
5 families all too common fed up with CPS.
6 Splitting children across three different
7 buildings is not good for any child.

8 The next issue I would like to
9 address is when I hear people say I don't have
10 a high school. Everyone has a high school.
11 The high school in my neighborhood is Level 2.
12 But I would never say I do not have a high
13 school. Okay?

14 If you are insinuating that this
15 school does not exist, I hear you. If you do
16 not like your neighborhood high school, that's
17 fine. Talk about -- everyone has a high
18 school. You are insinuating to the people that
19 are there that is not a good enough school for
20 you. That is not -- fine, say that, but don't
21 say I do not have a high school.

22 It will be -- when I was
23 explaining this to my son, it would be as if he
24 asked me for a bike, and he wanted a new bike,

1 and said I don't have one. Okay. He has a
2 bike. It would be as if he asked me to steal
3 his friend's and replace it with his. Thank
4 you.

5 STUDENT SANDERS: My name is Miles Sanders,
6 and I am a 3rd grader at NTA. I have been
7 there since I was in kindergarten. I have so
8 many friends, I can't even keep count of them.
9 Many of them are not even in my grade. It's
10 like a second family to me.

11 NTA has the most amazing
12 teachers. They make learning super exciting
13 and fun. For example, we just had a colonial
14 day (inaudible) on colonial times. It was so
15 much fun and lots of parents came to
16 participate. All of our teachers explained
17 things when someone didn't understand. All of
18 our -- they were there to help.

19 We also have a program called
20 Second Step. We get to learn with other kids
21 in other classes and get to know them. This
22 has helped me make new friends outside of my
23 regular home. We can compare things, I like
24 one thing and they might like another. They

1 encourage you to be partners with other
2 classes.

3 I've also gotten to know lots of
4 other teachers, and they're really, really
5 nice.

6 Lastly, I think the plan to
7 convert NTA to a high school is wrong. It will
8 hurt many families, including mine. I have two
9 younger siblings and my sister's here at NTA in
10 kindergarten. My brother is two years old.
11 Like many families, we will be split apart. I
12 would stay at NTA, my sister has to go to South
13 Loop and my brother can't go to either one. We
14 would have to go three different buildings. I
15 would have to make all new friends at a new
16 school. You will be tearing apart the NTA
17 community that I love.

18 This plan will hurt many families
19 and destroy a great community. Thanks.

20 NADIA: Hi. My name is Nadia. And I'm an
21 NTA parent, as well, with two children, one in
22 fourth grade, one in kindergarten. And I
23 wanted to put on the record a few e-mails that
24 we've become aware of since this whole

1 situation has -- since we've been made aware of
2 the situation.

3 This is an e-mail from Alderman
4 Pat Dowell to Barbara Byrd-Bennett, previous
5 CEO of Chicago Public Schools. Barbara and
6 Mike: I have spoken to the mayor a few times
7 about the need to address both the overcrowding
8 of South Loop Elementary and the need for an
9 area high school in the area. David Duval has
10 also attended meeting over at (inaudible) of
11 over 300 South Loop residents where these
12 issues were also raised.

13 Recently, the mayor attended an
14 Easter egg hunt in the South Loop where the
15 mayor said to the president of the neighborhood
16 association that he would work with neighboring
17 high schools and NTA. I want to get started on
18 this while CHA finds -- while the CHA is moving
19 on plans for the redevelopment of the
20 (inaudible). CHA board selection of the
21 developer and participate to occur in June
22 which will bring between 670 to 1100 new units
23 of housing to the South Loop. This does not
24 include all of the housing that is currently

1 under construction or the housing anticipated
2 to develop because of the investment made by
3 NPEA in this area. This is a matter of urgent
4 concern. Please advise."

5 This e-mail was dated April 14th,
6 2015. This is evidence that this plan is
7 stemming from a political exchange between the
8 mayor and the neighborhood alliance, a very
9 wealthy group.

10 It also points a desire to remove
11 these children from the area that -- and that
12 will be achieved by removing NTA as an
13 elementary school option.

14 It is purposely segregating black
15 and brown kids out of the area before they
16 return. Thank you.

17 MS. SHMITT: My name is Veronica Shmitt.
18 NTA parent of a second grader.

19 For the record, clear evidence
20 has been stated that the school action of
21 converting NTA into a high school is a
22 directive from the mayor's office. CPS is
23 merely a puppet in this proposal.

24 Why isn't CPS doing an inequity

1 analysis? Why is CPS ignoring all other
2 alternatives and opting to choose the most
3 harmful and drastic alternatives that will
4 further hurt families who were pushed out of
5 South Loop Elementary in 2005, had their
6 previous schools closed in 2013, and now they
7 found a home in and success in the NTA. This
8 school is 75 percent African American and
9 low-income. A beautiful population of black
10 families that has continually experienced
11 educational oppression and (inaudible) at the
12 hands of the mayor and CPS.

13 Why did Janice Jackson purposely
14 mislead the board falsely indicating that the
15 Level 1 achieved by students in the gifted
16 program when CPS' own information states
17 otherwise? Let's think about that.

18 Janice Jackson and disgraced
19 Claypool are so desperate to satisfy the
20 mayoral directive that they were and are
21 willing to make false statements in their roles
22 as leaders of CPS.

23 In Janice Jackson's new role as
24 interim CEO, she has continued to perpetuate

1 lies about NTA to further the Mayor's
2 directive.

3 When does this stop? When has
4 CPS ever made a decision to close a successful
5 elementary school that is Level 1 or Level 1+?
6 Only when it is a majority black and when they
7 believe the families will not fight back.

8 When do they choose to violate
9 their own rules and compromise every ethical
10 standard in dealing with NTA families and
11 students? They do it when the Mayor directs
12 them to.

13 STUDENT COOPER: Hi. My name is a Kenny
14 Cooper. I'm a first grader at NTA. I'm
15 thankful for my teacher in my class. Thank you
16 Mr. C, our principal. You guys are great.
17 Don't close NTA.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: These kids are here
19 because we are closing NTA. Kids that have
20 admired the administration and things they do
21 in the building, and giving them happiness to
22 learn and be educated. To close a building for
23 less fortunate families is not right. To take
24 advantage of people that don't have -- what

1 else would they have? Taking their school and
2 some of these people have nowhere to go.

3 I heard someone say they traveled
4 26 miles round trip and a high school you can't
5 go eight miles to school. That's insane.

6 I live on the west side of
7 Chicago by Garfield Park Conservatory and went
8 to Chicago Academy High School. If I can make
9 that travel, anyone else can make that travel.

10 To take over out youth is not
11 right. The youth is going to protect us in the
12 future. High school -- by the time you are in
13 high school, you are already (inaudible).
14 Let's not take away from the young children.

15 MS. VAN OPSTAL: My name is Beth. Two
16 quick things. First, for the people unfamiliar
17 with NTA, it was built as a promise to Ickes
18 Homes, and it is being taken away from us.

19 Second, the kids from Long Grove
20 were kicked out of South Loop and now they want
21 them back at NTA.

22 In the past year, Chief Education
23 Officer Janice Jackson continues to purposely
24 mislead members of the board and community.

1 This is very troubling.

2 The community, parents, teachers
3 and students relied on CPS for equality.

4 When we have a CEO who is willing
5 to give fabricated data of the school in order
6 to comply with the Mayor's directive, we have
7 no representation.

8 For the record, CEO Janice
9 Jackson lied about NTA on two occasions we know
10 of. First, at the July school board meeting,
11 Dr. Janice Jackson responded to a student
12 speaker in reference to the Level 1 status, she
13 stated you talk about the data and the
14 school -- the data in the school and the
15 students in the neighborhood school are not
16 seeing the same level of performance the
17 students in the gifted program are seeing.
18 That is not true.

19 NTA's SURP report from 2015 shows
20 Janice Jackson fabricated a version of the
21 data.

22 NTA reached Level 1 that year
23 solely due to the neighborhood kids. Woo-woo.

24 Why do you publicly (inaudible)?

1 It is disheartening to our kids.

2 Basically it was an attempt to
3 sway future votes. Janice Jackson is willing
4 to lie to parents about students to follow the
5 Mayor's orders.

6 Second. Recently, on WGN Janice
7 Jackson, who was CEO, stated on air in public,
8 The kids in Long Grove and Miller Home
9 (phonetic) are not going to selective
10 enrollment schools that the gifted kids are
11 attending. No one is graduating from the
12 gifted program. The oldest participants are
13 fifth grade.

14 Her statements have no basis.
15 This is CEO of public schools. For the record,
16 these are deliberate attempts to mislead the
17 board and community. Any and all information
18 forwarded to the hearing officer from CPS must
19 be deemed not trustworthy. Thank you.

20 MS. GOLDEN: Good afternoon. My name is
21 Tatiana. I have four daughters. Two graduated
22 from Ward and two currently in Healy. I am a
23 member of the PAC at Healy.

24 I believe we need to -- this

1 shuffling of kids is a Band-Aid. I believe
2 it's -- also definitely will create racial
3 tensions in the City. It is not helping
4 anything. It is just pushing things to the
5 side.

6 We need to build and strive to
7 build a new high school, maybe two new high
8 schools, in place of shuttling these kids out
9 of NTA, which is so wrong.

10 It is a Level 1+ school. I can
11 only speak from my heart.

12 (Applause.)

13 It is a Level 1 school, and that
14 is something everyone in the City tries to be.
15 Why should we shut that down. Why should we
16 displace parents, children, teachers, staff,
17 everyone from the top down? It doesn't make
18 any sense. We need more seats and we need a
19 new school -- a new high school.

20 MS. WILLIAMS: Hello. My name is Brittany
21 Williams. I'm just speaking on behalf of being
22 a -- of living in a mixed-income community and
23 being a mixed-income resident.

24 I just think that everyone

1 deserves, like, a fair opportunity with
2 education. Like, everyone deserves, like,
3 equal opportunity as far as education. And to
4 kick these people out is not fair. It is not
5 right. It is unjust. Just not okay.

6 I do believe everyone deserves an
7 equal opportunity. Like, these are our future
8 leaders. It is just not okay. I just came to
9 say that from my heart. I didn't prepare
10 anything. It is just not right.

11 MR. JOHNSON: Speakers 11 through 15,
12 please line up. Speakers 11 through 15.

13 MR. SANDERS: Hi. Aaron Sanders. Proud
14 parent of two NTA scholars, including the
15 little guy that gave that great speech.

16 I'm here to talk about the
17 discussion turning NTA into a high school and
18 where we talked about the need to obtain
19 feedback from the community. That's what CPS
20 said they were doing. But the reality was the
21 Mayor's office was directing CPS to convert NTA
22 into a high school as far back as 2015.

23 His order followed -- being the
24 mayor, followed what he made at an Easter egg

1 hunt sponsored by PDNA president, Tina
2 Feldstein, pictured right here, and the mayor
3 and the Easter Bunny.

4 After receiving a follow-up
5 e-mail from Alderman Dowell, the Mayor's office
6 went to work on NTA, specifically in 2016.
7 Michael Negron, Mayor's Chief of Policy, began
8 leading this discussion to close NTA. We got
9 proof going as far back as 2016 that Claypool
10 and Jackson, CEO Jackson, were in discussion
11 with the Mayor's Office turning NTA into a high
12 school. As for the Mayor's office, turning NTA
13 into a high school is time sensitive. The
14 Mayor's Chief of Policy in an e-mail to Janice
15 Jackson discussed the goal of starting
16 enrollment process for NTA's first high school
17 class in 2018.

18 So the whole idea this was all
19 developed with community involvement is a
20 complete joke. A bunch of bunk.

21 This was obviously before any
22 notification of scheduled community meetings on
23 the issue.

24 In essence, CPS has never looked

1 at any other viable option on the high school.

2 Dr. Jackson has confirmed in at
3 least two meetings on the record that she never
4 looked at any other option for a high school in
5 the South Loop other than NTA.

6 This changing NTA to a high
7 school is a school action. That must meet
8 specific criteria with true equitable analysis
9 that CPS has avoided at all costs.

10 The mayor is not CPS. The Mayor
11 is attempting to turn NTA into a high school
12 for political gain.

13 I will tell you one thing. In
14 addition to this just terrible story here,
15 there are alternatives. QUE, Chicago United
16 for Equity, did a racial equity analysis. Just
17 let me finish on this. One point. I
18 understand. But the last thing I want to
19 mention to you, in that racial equity analysis,
20 we had plenty of options. One of those options
21 was let's sell old South Loop. Let's sell the
22 annex. By my own math, and I'm not an expert
23 on this, and I know math is hard, but the truth
24 of the matter is, we would be able to pull

1 together at least \$30 to \$50 million to be able
2 to build that new high school. Let's do that.

3 STUDENT MARQUEZ: Hello. I'm Marquez, and
4 I'm in sixth grade. And I have been attending
5 NTA since I was third grade. Even though I
6 haven't been there most of my life, they have
7 been like a second family. And I clicked with
8 everyone.

9 I want to tell you, this is an
10 act of prejudice against our school, and you
11 should not close our school down because we
12 have just gained the status of a 1+ school. So
13 just because we have done that, you all -- you
14 guys should not do this to us, because we have
15 been showing that we can do the hard work for
16 all of ourselves, and we shouldn't be acted
17 against because of guys -- you want -- and our
18 race.

19 Just like our teachers have been
20 saying, if we don't get it, just shut us down.
21 If you want to change our school, just shut it
22 down, because we won't be the same school if
23 you shut us down. Thank you very much.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Good evening. I'm a

1 community member. I've lived in this area, a
2 little bit south of here. I guess I'm
3 officially in Bronzeville. And I lived here
4 since 1999. And I want to applaud parents, the
5 students on both sides who care this much about
6 education.

7 Wouldn't the Chicago Public
8 Schools all be in a different position if we
9 had more parents who cared and more teachers
10 who were there for more than a paycheck.

11 I went to Chicago Teachers
12 College. I passed the National Teachers
13 Association test. I was certified by the
14 Chicago board, interviewed by them. I taught
15 in a number of Chicago Public Schools, and --
16 beginning as a substitute teacher, who went
17 around to different schools. So I'm glad you
18 guys -- I got out of teaching because I
19 realized that wasn't my calling. The only one
20 who should be there in a classroom is someone
21 who feels it's their calling. However, we know
22 that some people are turning this into
23 something it is not.

24 I have been called a racist. I

1 wouldn't live at 29th and Michigan if I were.

2 I think we got to tone it down,
3 listen to each other, respect each other.
4 Don't threaten people with photographs on a
5 placard saying it is the hunger games. I had
6 someone who had to tell me what the hunger
7 games were.

8 Most of the good parents in this
9 room are not promoting violence, and that's
10 what that means.

11 MS. CROSBY: Good evening. My name is
12 Patricia. Thank you.

13 I'm a parent of six NTA students,
14 four already graduated. We have two left.

15 (Applause.)

16 MS. CROSBY: Thank you.

17 But I wanted to just mention I'm
18 part of -- I wasn't here for the last meeting.
19 But I'm part of one of the Ickes. I used
20 to live in Ickes -- where NTA is where I used
21 to live at. And I remember CPS telling us that
22 the same thing that Chip said earlier, was that
23 the Ickes kids would be able to go to NTA,
24 enroll into NTA no matter where you live, which

1 unfortunately they reneged on, because I know
2 that when I was able to get Section 8, and I
3 moved out of the area, it was really hard for
4 me to get my now 21-year-old into NTA. So I
5 had to -- I had to use my mother's address, who
6 lives in the (inaudible) in order for him to go
7 to the school.

8 Now, it start being a little lax
9 down the road, like some year down the road
10 where I was able to put my other children into
11 the school -- into the school, because I'm a
12 foster parent.

13 But I just don't believe CPS when
14 they say that the NTA students, no matter where
15 you live at, will be able to go to that NTA
16 high school. I don't believe it, because they
17 already lied before.

18 MR. JOHNSON: Speakers 16 through 20,
19 please line up. Speakers 16 through 20.

20 MR. WU: My name is David Wu, and I am a
21 father of three children that have graduated or
22 attended CPS schools. Long-time Chinatown
23 resident.

24 I've had the chance to talk

1 publicly about the lack of neighborhood high
2 school for Chinatown students, not only
3 currently, but for the past 50 years.

4 As a result, our students are
5 dispersed into nearly 50 schools, and these
6 schools are not able to address the needs of
7 our LAP students.

8 But the high school is not for
9 Chinatown. I said that CPS planned -- CPS'
10 plan creates one of the most diverse
11 neighborhood high schools in Chicago. While we
12 won't know exact demographics of students
13 involved, CPS has provided information that the
14 current CPS high school students within that
15 attendance and preference boundaries are 27
16 percent Asian, 21 percent African American, 19
17 percent Hispanic, 10 percent white and 15
18 percent other.

19 I wanted to fact check my
20 statement. I looked up demographics of every
21 CPS neighborhood high school to see how other
22 schools (inaudible) of their students, four of
23 these racial ethnic groups. Out of 46 high
24 schools, only four, Amundsen, Lincoln Park, and

1 Senn, all on the north side, 10 percent of the
2 student body were Asians, 10 percent African
3 American, 10 percent Hispanic and 10 percent
4 white. Only one, Schurz, also on the north
5 side, had at least three racial ethnic groups,
6 with at least 10 percent.

7 40 percent of the neighborhood
8 high schools have only one racial ethnic group
9 with at least 10 percent.

10 41 percent of the high schools
11 have two racial groups at least 10 percent.

12 Over a year ago, Chinatown pushed
13 for CPS capital funds to be used for a new high
14 school for Armour Square and Bridgeport.
15 Unfortunately, those funds which come around
16 every decade or so were allocated (inaudible),
17 but the need for a high school eludes us.

18 I support CPS' plan to create a
19 unique and diverse high school for Armour
20 Square, Bridgeport, Bronzeville, South Loop.

21 MS. GREER: My name is Elizabeth Greer. I
22 am chair with the school council at NTA. This
23 question has been asked before, but for the
24 record, I do demand an answer. What is the

1 request for this proposal for this school
2 action? CPS needs to let the community know
3 who submitted this proposal and when did they
4 submit it. This is in the guidelines
5 (inaudible). We demand action.

6 (Inaudible). I will be looking
7 for that answer, because I want to know if
8 possibly the request for this proposal for the
9 school actually came from this letter that Pat
10 Dowell wrote in April of 2015. It is a letter
11 to Mayor Rahm Emanuel on official letterhead.
12 And at the end of the letter, she writes, I ask
13 you to join me in support of this effort to
14 resolve the school overcrowding issue in the
15 South Loop by merging South Loop Elementary
16 School with National Teachers Academy and
17 converting NTA to become a neighborhood high
18 school.

19 That sounds very familiar,
20 doesn't it? It was CC'd. CC was Dr. Barbara
21 Byrd-Bennett, CEO of Chicago Public Schools at
22 that time.

23 Nine months later, our Principal,
24 Isaac Castelaz, sent an e-mail to Alderman

1 Dowell wondering about this rumor that it will
2 be turned into a high school. I'm having
3 conversations with CPS, Mayor's Office and Ms.
4 Shelton, the principal of South Loop
5 Elementary, about possible expansion options
6 that does not involve the NTA facility. And he
7 says, Thanks. That's good to know, because I
8 heard this plan to turn NTA into a high school.
9 To my knowledge, no such plans is in the works.
10 But I'm not sure if organizations or
11 constituents within the ward may be pushing for
12 this. And Pat Dowell said five minutes later,
13 I've heard of this. It is not a real plan at
14 this time.

15 This is irrefutable factual
16 evidence that our principal has been lied to by
17 an elected official Pat Dowell, and the NTA has
18 been left out of the conversation about our
19 school for years. Thank you.

20 CATHERINE: Good evening, everyone. My
21 name is Catherine, and I am a proud parent of a
22 three-and-a-half-year-old. We live right
23 across the street from the new South Loop
24 Elementary School that's going up.

1 I wanted to start off with a
2 quote from Martin Luther King. Of course my
3 phone messed up. A wonderful woman I just met
4 this week posted this on her Facebook page.
5 Many white Americans of goodwill have never
6 connected bigotry with economic exploitation.
7 They have deplored prejudice but tolerated or
8 ignored economic injustice.

9 So I want to speak about Phillips
10 High School. I recently joined the LSC there
11 as a volunteer, basically because they don't
12 have -- the parents there don't have the
13 capacity to come and attend these meetings.
14 The only meeting I was able to attend that
15 we've had so far was just me, another community
16 member, the principal and one of the guidance
17 counselors.

18 Phillips Academy has about half
19 of its seats open. I decided that as a parent
20 in the South Loop, I would like to invest in a
21 high school, to give my son a viable option for
22 high school in case or in the event he does not
23 place into one of the selected enrollment
24 schools or selective enrollment school is not

1 suited for his learning style.

2 I started going and volunteering
3 at the academic cafes there. The students
4 there are all super wonderful. There are some
5 challenges. I think there's inappropriate uses
6 of technology there that I was a little
7 concerned about. Not in -- it's about teaching
8 math on the computer for students that don't
9 have access to a computer or Internet at home.
10 I don't know if that's a great choice.

11 I would like to get more involved
12 and find out the reasoning.

13 They don't have a librarian
14 there, which I think is really sad. So if CPS
15 wants to talk about all the investing they've
16 done in Phillips High School, why don't we have
17 a librarian there?

18 STUDENT CROSBY: My name is Clinton Crosby.
19 I'm a 7th-8th grade student at NTA. All I'm
20 going to say, like, you all trying to take away
21 from some of our kids that need education.
22 They all messed up the future for kids who
23 don't have great futures. Intelligent people
24 who do intelligent things. And, like, NTA,

1 they just not just teachers, they are our
2 families, second mammas, second daddies,
3 whatever you want them to be. They teach you
4 in a way that's going -- they going to teach
5 you in a way that's going to help you learn,
6 but also help you love them and love yourself,
7 love education.

8 And all I'm trying to say, you
9 all trying to take away and give, but all
10 you're doing is taking away. And you all think
11 that it's going to have some value to what you
12 all done, but it really don't. Just one thing
13 is everything. That's all I have to say.

14 DEBBIE: Hi. My name is Debbie. I was
15 born and raised in the near south area. 20
16 years ago, this area was very different. Overt
17 racism was very strong in Bridgeport. While I
18 imagine it being -- well, I can imagine what it
19 was four years ago. I'm sure many in the room
20 can attest we are moving towards progress. For
21 families in the Chinatown area, including
22 Armour Square and Bridgeport, and the majority
23 of Asians are not the model (inaudible). They
24 do not come from high-income learners or

1 parents with high-educational attainment. Many
2 parents are recent immigrants who don't speak
3 English or work low-skilled jobs to provide for
4 their families. So families after families
5 strive for upper mobility and look to education
6 as a means to get there.

7 For a high school to serve a very
8 distinct area of Chicago, it must incorporate a
9 very diverse student body that reflects
10 residents in terms of race and socioeconomic
11 class.

12 Currently, 93 percent of Haines,
13 33 percent of Ward, 87 percent of Healy are
14 low-income and more in the boundary. While
15 this is an imperfect proposal, it provides
16 opportunities from seven schools where students
17 are predominantly low-income, and it also
18 serves the purpose of providing improved
19 educational outcome at the high school level at
20 a location close by. Unless another viable
21 option is on the table, this proposal could
22 hurt the greater Chinatown area more than it
23 ever has.

24 Although I do not have children

1 of my own, I hope that they will be able to be
2 exposed to different types of people at an
3 early age and have a continued experience into
4 their adulthood. Thank you.

5 MR. MOSKOWITZ: Good evening. My name is
6 (inaudible) Moskowitz. I am here as a proud
7 parent of a first grader at NTA. I'm also a
8 CPS employee, but I am here to speak as a
9 parent. I want to share my particular
10 perspective, which is that, in my view, the
11 status of NTA as a 1+ school or the debate
12 about whether the gifted RGC scores are what
13 attributes to their -- its rating misses the
14 point; and therefore, I would not like to make
15 the argument NTA should not be closed because
16 it's a 1+ it school. I want to make the
17 argument it should not be closed because what
18 it represents to the students and to the
19 parents, what it means as a community that
20 previous students have said what it is to them.
21 And that a school, its greatness, what it can
22 do for students is determined by relationships
23 that are established between the different
24 members of the community, between the staff

1 members, between the administration, between
2 the teachers, between the J.P. who -- of
3 anybody across the entire City of Chicago is
4 the only one who knows how to pronounce my
5 daughter's nickname right. Even people in our
6 family. And I have to explain to my daughter
7 when she asks me, I don't understand, it's not
8 fair. Why do I have to give up my school? And
9 I don't have a good answer for her. The one
10 answer that I would like to give her, that I
11 think about giving her, is that the truth is if
12 she were going to a school which was not
13 predominantly African American, which was not
14 predominantly low-income, she would not have
15 to, because they would have political will and
16 clout to stand up to it. And it pains me to
17 say that.

18 Now I don't have a good answer to
19 give her as a CPS employee or as a parent to
20 tell her why it is she has to give up her
21 school and why it should be fair that she has
22 to give up her school so other people can have
23 it.

24 I want to leave my testimony on

1 the record on what it means to me as a parent
2 and to her as a student, as a child of a
3 community that's been created for her. So
4 thank you.

5 MR. JOHNSON: Speakers 21 through 25,
6 please line up. 21 through 25.

7 MS. EWING: Good evening, everyone. My
8 name is Eve Ewing. I am not in any way
9 affiliated with NTA. I'm here because I'm a
10 community member and to provide my professional
11 opinion. So when I say my professional
12 opinion, my opinion is someone who attended CPS
13 my entire life, who became a CPS teacher, who
14 got an undergraduate degree at the University
15 of Chicago. I have two master's degrees, one
16 in teaching and one in education, policy and
17 management. And I have doctorate from Harvard
18 University. I know a thing or two.

19 The people in this room -- I'd
20 like to address people in the room who are not
21 affiliated with NTA and who look on people
22 being disruptive and rowdy. I heard
23 Mr. Johnson's admonition to be respectful.

24 Yesterday was MLK, and we do not

1 celebrate Dr. King being respectful. We do not
2 celebrate Dr. King listening quietly, but we
3 are asking that of our children.

4 NTA parents have been respectful.
5 They have respectfully engaged with the
6 aldermen. They have respectfully engaged with
7 City Council members, with members of the
8 school board, and it didn't work. So they are
9 not being respectful anymore.

10 When you see them in here being
11 loud and you shake your heads, keep in mind
12 there is a reason for that. They tried to
13 follow the rules. You know who else followed
14 the rules? The 12,000 children who were
15 displaced in the last school closures. They
16 followed the rules, and 80 percent of those
17 children were black.

18 So if you want to talk about what
19 racism is and isn't, I refer to (inaudible),
20 because there is a sick understanding of what
21 racism is there, if you mean living in a black
22 neighborhood.

23 This is the same song, different
24 day. And, Mr. Johnson, I hear you in saying we

1 need to be respectful because people have
2 decisions they need to make. None of the
3 people who make decisions are in this room.
4 None of them are here. We have no
5 accountability. We have no elected officials
6 to speak for us. What we see is CPS employees
7 trying to do the right thing who are out here,
8 face it, angry community members.

9 This is one of the most diverse
10 groups I've been in in my entire life growing
11 up in Chicago, and it's diverse because they're
12 pitting folks against each other.

13 These are false choices.
14 Chinatown children deserve a good school.
15 Bronzeville children deserve a good school.

16 (Inaudible) and wrap up. I
17 adore my neighbors. Tomorrow (inaudible).

18 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

19 MS. EWING: By keeping in mind the lives of
20 other children that are not (inaudible). Thank
21 you.

22 MR. JOHNSON: Next speaker.

23 STUDENT WILLIAMS: My name is Demar
24 Williams. And when -- I think that my brother

1 or my friends and everybody who spoke before
2 me, because when you take away -- when you take
3 away a school, you take away a place, you are
4 not just taking, like, the education, you are
5 taking away a family, like, everybody, like,
6 where they grew up at, what they doing. And
7 everybody love NTA. And everybody love the
8 children. They support each other and they
9 learn. Everybody who -- like your religion,
10 your skin color, what you like, what you do.
11 And everybody at staff, Ms. Audrey, Mr. J.P.,
12 everybody, the principal, assistant principal,
13 everybody who showed up today, they had -- they
14 here to stop what you doing, because when you
15 take away our school, you not only taking away
16 what people think, you taking away how, like,
17 they live and how they think about other
18 people.

19 And like the lady before me said,
20 nobody here to speak for us. But, to be
21 honest, you all trying -- all I want to say is
22 that when all of us -- when all of us -- like,
23 we all been respectful. We been waiting while
24 everybody else was talking. When you all

1 telling us be quiet, be respectful. When we
2 been respectful, our voice and we being quiet,
3 explain how we feel and how we think or
4 how -- how we feel about this, and when we --

5 MR. JOHNSON: Finish your point.

6 STUDENT WILLIAMS: And when -- all I want
7 to say, you taking -- not only taking away
8 education, you're taking away people lives,
9 people family, and little kids that just
10 started school, they won't have a chance to,
11 like, see how other people -- they don't get a
12 chance to see about different religions,
13 different, like, diversity.

14 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

15 MR. HARRIS: Hello. My name is Corey
16 Harris. Proud parent of students at NTA. Up
17 until recently and to this CPS closure, I have
18 realized what racism is. And just in my view,
19 I feel like racism is prejudice alongside of
20 power. And with the CPS with this power and
21 this president has taken this school -- this
22 school has become a pillar of our community,
23 where kids can look forward to going to school.
24 They look forward to having a better education.

1 And we have other kids, too, like the kids from
2 Chinatown, seem like they going through the
3 same thing that we going through, but instead
4 of allowing us to go to school together -- in
5 which you have other parents, other Caucasian
6 families that took a chance and enrolled their
7 kids into a predominantly black school, and
8 felt -- you know, realize that it was
9 prosperous for them and their children. And
10 they got a chance to see that we can pull
11 together.

12 Taking our schools from us
13 is -- you have, like, other kids from
14 Englewood, their school's closing, and they are
15 able to go to Phillips. And we give the kids
16 from Chinatown a chance to go to Phillips,
17 maybe they can enhance what we already have at
18 Phillips, to better all our schools. You know
19 what I'm saying?

20 You have a lot of parents that
21 wasn't able to get good educations, so they had
22 to work two jobs. That's why we don't have a
23 lot of parents here now, because we have such
24 poor schools in our community, they had to take

1 on two jobs just to make ends meet.

2 And if we have schools like NTA
3 that allow us to get good educations, we can
4 bring some back to our community besides the
5 bad that you see on TV.

6 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. Speakers 27
7 through 32. Speakers 27 through 32.

8 MR. MARU: Hello. My name is Matsuo Maru.
9 I have a child at South Loop as well as NTA.
10 CPS pledges their commitment to provide every
11 child from every community with a high-quality
12 education, so who's being served by this
13 decision?

14 The New York Times published that
15 CPS students appeared to be learning faster
16 than students across the country, according to
17 a Stanford University study. Although
18 (inaudible) attributed, the pattern in Chicago
19 shows that black, white achievement gaps are
20 not narrowing.

21 In fact, in another New York
22 Times articles based on research by the same
23 Stanford University team, highlighted a
24 three-year academic gap between white and black

1 student at CPS. The racial achievement gap is
2 pervasive. The CPS shared academic data
3 segregated by school program. This level of
4 data is typically not made public.

5 When you examine a neighborhood
6 program, and there is a significant racial
7 achievement gap at South Loop Elementary, 8 out
8 of 10 students that do not meet grade-level
9 proficiency are black, 8 out of 10.

10 Of the 240 neighborhood students
11 that are black, 60 not meeting grade-level
12 proficiency. 60. And while there are 60 black
13 students not meeting grade-level proficiency,
14 there are only 6, 6 white students not meeting
15 grade-level proficiency. This is unacceptable.

16 The steering committee data also
17 shows increases of students' progress at South
18 Loop. 7 out of 10 students that do not meet
19 their expected annual growth (inaudible), 7 out
20 of 10. Why a disproportionate number of black
21 students not achieving at grade level? And
22 more importantly, not adequately growing. So
23 who's being served by this decision?

24 Eliminating NTA, a school where

1 blacks kids are growing (inaudible). 75
2 percent of the schools across the country do
3 not serve white students. Transitioning black
4 NTA students to South Loop Elementary, a school
5 where disproportionately black students are not
6 meeting expected growth, does not serve black
7 students.

8 Martin Luther King said,
9 "Capitalism does not permit an even flow of
10 economic resources. With this system, a small
11 privileged few are rich beyond conscience, and
12 almost all others are doomed to be poor at some
13 level. That's the way the system works. And
14 since we know that the system will not change
15 the rules, we are going to have to change the
16 system." Thank you.

17 MR. CORLEY: Hello. My name is Jeff
18 Corley. Before I speak, I just want to
19 recognize Patrick David who organized -- helped
20 organize this tonight. He also runs a tutoring
21 program that impacts a lot of the kids here.
22 So if you really want to get involved, please
23 see Patrick David about the tutoring program he
24 has every week.

1 I've been a South Loop resident
2 for 23 years. I have watched the neighborhood
3 grow. I never thought it would take this long
4 to address a lot of the CPS overcrowding --
5 school overcrowding structure needs, which was
6 really universal.

7 I am in favor of trying to
8 combine the student population to find a
9 solution for both the overcrowding, combining,
10 improving the education experience for all, and
11 as well as a high school option.

12 My family's been personally
13 impacted by this. After having kids, the CPS
14 had changed the neighborhood boundary. Not
15 having a pre-K program, NTA at that time, I had
16 to search for alternative solutions for my
17 family. And I understand where that comes in.
18 But we're losing too many diverse families when
19 it comes time to select a neighborhood school
20 or kids ending up taking CPS slots over in the
21 West Loop. That's not fair as well.

22 But at the end of the day, the
23 numbers are such that the South Loop is growing
24 and doubled in population from 2000-2010, and

1 then from 2010-2012 another ten percent.

2 Now you got 10,000 developments,
3 that doesn't include a plan for transportation,
4 it doesn't include Michael Reese. It's
5 happening.

6 We're going to be right back here
7 in a couple of years regardless of what side
8 you are on. This is going to have to be
9 addressed. There will have to be hard
10 decisions made.

11 And at this time, CPS estimates
12 that there's 4400 kids of school age between
13 Printers Row and I-55. So at some point we
14 have to consider these numbers. And at the end
15 of the day, a new structure needs to be
16 addressed for everyone. Thank you.

17 MR. JACOBY: It's not very comfortable
18 being called a racist.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You're a racist.

20 MR. JACOBY: Yeah. And having my daughter
21 of Chinese birth see that her father doesn't
22 like brown people, or trying to explain to my
23 college-age daughter, who was sent to South
24 Loop that was 98 percent black, their father

1 doesn't want her going to school with black
2 people.

3 I think you need to tone down the
4 racism --

5 (Audience shouting.)

6 MR. JACOBY: -- PDNA in this area, we've
7 had community meetings in this church about the
8 need for a high school starting in 2011. So
9 there were a lot of efforts --

10 MR. JOHNSON: Excuse me.

11 MR. JACOBY: That's great to teach your
12 kids.

13 (Audience shouting.)

14 MR. JACOBY: This is a neighborhood high
15 school, a local community asset. NTA was built
16 mainly with their (inaudible) funds.

17 If this community deems it
18 appropriate to use a community asset for a
19 community high school, I think that that is an
20 appropriate action to take.

21 MR. JOHNSON: Excuse me.

22 MR. JACOBY: Forget it. They don't want to
23 hear it.

24 MR. JOHNSON: Next speaker.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Good evening. You
2 know, I'm a parent of a first grader, and I
3 purposely picked NTA for its racial makeup.

4 I was not afraid to walk in the
5 door. And I traveled down Lake Shore Drive to
6 do it every day. My first grader has never
7 missed a day of school. That's how much he
8 loves NTA.

9 But I digress. Let's talk about
10 Dr. Jackson, CEO. On 2/5/2017, a meeting was
11 held with her. I was present, so was LAC
12 president.

13 At that meeting, on the record, I
14 asked Dr. Jackson whether or not she was even
15 aware of the previous boundary change in 2005
16 that occurred in the area of South Loop. And
17 John Jacoby, who just left here, he should know
18 about that, because he was quoting an article
19 talking about how South Loop Elementary had
20 improved after so many of the kids had left
21 that was low-income. So he should know.

22 But more importantly, Dr. Jackson
23 did not realize at that time that a boundary
24 change kicking so many kids out of South Loop

1 Elementary, black and low-income, and pushed to
2 NTA, she was unaware of that.

3 She made declarations that this
4 new proposal is to right a wrong. But she
5 didn't know about this wrong until this
6 year -- well, last year, June 2017, yet she had
7 conversation with the mayor as -- going back in
8 2015, after she took over for Barbara
9 Byrd-Bennett.

10 So this proposal, which she is
11 saying in the media is to right this wrong that
12 occurred in 2005, she is completely unaware of
13 it.

14 So for the hearing officer, for
15 CPS and for Chip, you are clearly willing to
16 move these families back and forth and
17 prejudice the same families that were
18 prejudiced in 2005. That is not right.

19 MR. JOHNSON: Next speaker.

20 STUDENT CALEB GORSON: Good afternoon. My
21 name is Caleb Gorson. I'm a fifth grader at
22 National Teachers Academy.

23 I'm here to represent my teachers
24 at my school. My homeroom is Ms. Albritton.

1 My second teacher is Ms. West. The principal
2 teacher and the assistant principal teacher are
3 doing as much as they can to help our school.

4 I think what you are saying,
5 Chip, that you want us to -- that you want us
6 to stop talking so you can do the presentation,
7 but also one thing that NTA wants you to know
8 is we want you to hear our voice in what we are
9 doing. We're trying to help our school to do
10 what we are doing, because my mom lived here
11 since she was born. After she had to move, we
12 had to go until my dad helped us move. I have
13 to walk four blocks to get to -- my house to
14 get to the school.

15 If you move us to wherever you're
16 going to move us, we are going to have to walk
17 more blocks than we have to walk.

18 STUDENT DEVONTE McNULTY: Good evening. My
19 name is Devonte. I'm in 4th grade. So I have
20 an old -- I have my grandfather who lives in an
21 apartment building. So the reason why NTA is
22 being turned into a high school because -- we
23 have so many activities and stuff like that.
24 And so what you're doing is learning about

1 the -- 1990 -- so -- so this is not right.
2 This is not right because it's dangerous
3 outside and it's cold. And minus ten degrees.
4 You got to walk four blocks from our Long Grove
5 to South Loop.

6 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

7 MR. SHIU: My name is Simon Shiu.
8 (Inaudible.) Okay? And I notice my kids not
9 going to -- they go to neighbor high school.
10 But my neighbor is -- my neighbor have black,
11 white. Okay? Spanish, Italian. Different
12 country. Okay? But the thing seems like for
13 everybody know, if you look at inside a whole
14 bunch of elementary school, doesn't have a high
15 school. Okay? And then probably we need a
16 high school.

17 NTA is a wonderful Band-Aid, but
18 we need two high schools, at least two, in
19 order to serve.

20 Calling for information right
21 now, build a new high school with only 1200
22 students, divide by four, only 300 student able
23 to attend that neighborhood high school. Okay?

24 When I come over here, you are

1 right, I'm thinking about our -- one of our two
2 schools. If I can save one half hour to study,
3 then I don't have to let people let me off.

4 Okay?

5 And then the other thing, one
6 thing I come over here to let you know -- to
7 say I'm Chinese, but the thing I work for, come
8 here, I taking the bus from 109th Street on
9 the -- for ten year. So don't tell me about
10 I'm racist.

11 The other thing we need the high
12 school. Period.

13 Thank you for those two kids
14 speaking. And next time at the meeting, let
15 the people try to finish the sentence and then
16 can say what's wrong and come to speak. Thank
17 you.

18 DAVID: I am David Manelope (phonetic).
19 I'm from Bridgeport. I'm a labor activist. I
20 (inaudible) student debt at the college level.
21 I'm a member of the Bridgeport Lions.

22 And I think it's worth stepping
23 back and thinking about the big picture here
24 with an unelected school board.

1 Public services like public
2 schools are our right, and they deserve to be
3 distributed with a fairness, not favoritism.

4 When you do not have a check and
5 balance of a vote over a school board, you're
6 going to get outcomes with favoritism. And you
7 are not going to have that bonding where you're
8 going to get access, whether founded or not, of
9 favoritism. And you are left with situations
10 which are profoundly undemocratic, where
11 there's feedback, but it's like you're talking
12 at a kid, and you are hoping that you have a
13 good kid in office to bless you and pat your
14 head. That's not how democracy should work.
15 We're living in a democracy.

16 I think you get these situations
17 where they just talk at you. And look around
18 here, and there are people who have different
19 perspectives, but who care very, very much
20 about NTA, about the need for a high school
21 that provides uplift. And all of us as
22 community members deserve a vote.

23 These school officials can and do
24 wreak havoc in our kids' lives. And we deserve

1 to be able to hold them accountable at the
2 highest level, no matter where we are on this
3 particular issue.

4 MS. PINAGLIA: My name is Joey. I am a
5 resident of Bridgeport. I actually spoke at
6 last week's meeting in favor of the high
7 school, but opposed to the current boundaries
8 because they leave out of half of Bridgeport
9 and all of Canaryville.

10 It occurred to me last week as I
11 sat through the whole meeting and didn't
12 realize what I was faced up against until I
13 came across Facebook. I rewatched the meeting.
14 Now I am here today because I thought, well,
15 what can I say that's different? And it
16 occurred to me, the young lady who spoke from
17 Harvard with the bow on her neck. Yes. It
18 occurred to me that you actually kind of
19 started the point that I thought of. We're all
20 sitting in here fighting for our kids. Some of
21 us think we're wrong, some think we're right.
22 But the fact of the matter is, nobody is
23 addressing the elephant in the room, which is
24 how many millions of dollars that CPS is taking

1 from CPS budgets and giving to charter schools.

2 And it occurred to me about this
3 last week after -- I'm fighting for a high
4 school for my kids. There are buildings
5 around. They're not quality because they're
6 gang-infested, because they're low-income,
7 because, you know, there's no money being
8 invested in them. But we can send money to
9 privately run schools that are not even held to
10 the same standards of CPS schools.

11 So I'd really like to see CPS
12 take a hard look at are you really getting your
13 bang for your buck out of these charter schools
14 as you are taking money away.

15 Now, you have a room full of
16 people fighting for this little niblet that we
17 are all desperately in need of. Thank you.

18 MR. JOHNSON: Speakers 33 through 37.
19 Speakers 33 through 37, please line up.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Good evening,
21 everybody. You know, throughout this process,
22 NTA families have often been described as
23 passionate. I want to say very clearly, I
24 don't see ourselves passionate, I see ourselves

1 informed.

2 I want to make sure everybody
3 understands the effects of displacement. I
4 want you to understand the negative effects of
5 displacement of students. And academic
6 achievements starts one year before the move
7 even happens, as soon as the announcement
8 occurs, and continues up to three years after
9 the displacement occurs.

10 And I want you to take into
11 consideration that this board has had the most
12 school closures. And when you had school
13 closures in 2013, most of them happened right
14 here in this ward. They tried it in Pershing
15 and Bronzeville before when they combined
16 schools. You know what happened? The ratings
17 of the schools dropped. This is not a good
18 option.

19 Also, do you know that NTA
20 families -- many of them have been displaced
21 two to three times already because of previous
22 closures.

23 Do you know many of the NTA
24 families have also been kicked out of South

1 Loop Elementary before?

2 So I ask you to go back to those
3 statistics where it starts one year before,
4 lasts up to three years after, and tell me who
5 has the right to continue to destabilize
6 education of these children who are, perhaps,
7 the most vulnerable of us. Do you think that
8 is your right? If you do, let me state
9 clearly, it is not your right.

10 If you want to teach your
11 children about diversity, what I want to say,
12 start with telling them treat your neighbors
13 with dignity. You don't take something because
14 you want or need it. And start showing your
15 children what it means to work or build at a
16 high-performing high school, instead of taking
17 it as if it belongs to you.

18 And you, Mr. Jacoby, I don't know
19 what you will say to your daughter and how you
20 want to explain this process.

21 You're on record (inaudible)
22 south side, June 21, 2017, admitting there are
23 1500 available high school seats in the area,
24 but you said that's a valid argument in terms

1 of the fact that these schools are
2 under-utilized. The answer to it is, None of
3 our people will send our kids there. Face it.
4 It is your quote.

5 MS. LEE: My name is Nicole Lee. I'm a
6 life-long resident of Chinatown. Product of
7 the Chicago Public School system. These two
8 ladies here, young women, are former classmates
9 of mine. They are parents at NTA, and I stand
10 with them at NTA today as an Asian parent.

11 I want to tell you why I am
12 opposed to the current proposal, because there
13 are no winners. There are only losers in this
14 current plan.

15 There is a need for a high
16 school, and there has been for a long time. I
17 don't want the kids in the community where I
18 live, I don't want the kids -- any of the kids
19 that came up here to speak to have to travel 26
20 miles. They shouldn't need to do that with the
21 public education system in our society today.

22 I was part of a focus group on
23 Saturday that CPS commissioned, and the
24 Chinatown and Bridgeport neighborhoods were the

1 last ones on this list to have the focus group.

2 We received the invitation on
3 Wednesday for a Saturday afternoon. I was one
4 of seven people able to make it. And the
5 facilitator started the conversation wanting us
6 to be rooted in this quote that he gave, which
7 is, All the children are well, which is on the
8 side of a table, which means life is good. And
9 it means that the daily struggles of existence,
10 even among poor people, include the proper care
11 of the young and the defenseless. The
12 implication meaning that all of the children
13 are our responsibility, yours, mine, everybody
14 in this room and everybody around.

15 So what are we going to do
16 together to make sure that we have
17 opportunities for our children and every child?
18 Because our kids are your kids, your kids are
19 mine.

20 MS. BUSH: My name is Sarah Bush. I'm a
21 parent of two of kids at NTA. This is the
22 fourth public hearing I've been to. I've been
23 to CPS board meetings. I'm a working parent.
24 I don't have time. I keep coming because this

1 is really important.

2 We've heard through this process
3 opposition for the plan from the NTA community.
4 We've told you what we lost at NTA, our
5 culture, integrity and awareness, restorative
6 justice program and our fabulous student
7 teachers and staff who created a learning
8 environment that challenges and engages all our
9 children.

10 You heard about how students and
11 teachers working together to help NTA in
12 reading and math (inaudible.)

13 You also heard from residents of
14 the South Loop, Chinatown and Bridgeport
15 community who all spoke about the need for a
16 neighborhood high school option. This proposed
17 plan does nothing. It ignores the concerns of
18 NTA communities. It tears our community apart,
19 splitting our student body across four
20 different buildings. It disadvantages those
21 who stay at NTA as the elementary age
22 population shrinks. How will NTA be able to
23 continue to offer a reach program (inaudible)
24 success at school? How will it retain and

1 attract their teachers? Most importantly, NTA
2 will eventually go away. Future generations
3 will lose access to this gem, which has so ably
4 served low-income, African American majority
5 population.

6 As my friend here points out,
7 this proposal doesn't meet the needs of the
8 near south community. Even when it opens, it
9 won't be able to serve the whole community.
10 It's built as an elementary school.

11 There is another way. Last week
12 I participated in the QUE racial equity
13 analysis. This tool used across the country
14 begins with the commitment to racial equity.
15 We have representatives from many different
16 viewpoints, and the discussion was respectful
17 and collaborative, unlike my experience with
18 CPS. I felt heard, and the outcome was not
19 predetermined.

20 This is the way policies should
21 be made in Chicago, not driven by closed-door
22 meetings where few voices of privilege
23 dominate. Thank you.

24 MS. WATKINS: I'm Latasha Watkins. I have

1 a child at NTA. And I want to thank you,
2 Nicole, first all for coming up and taking a
3 stand and saying that she agrees that NTA
4 should not be compromised in terms of our
5 education for the students there to gain a high
6 school.

7 What I want you to realize, and I
8 want to make sure is on record today, is that
9 the politicians continue to pit us against each
10 other, and they give us false choices.

11 So Pat Dowell, on Friday, June
12 2nd, 2017, Dr. Jackson had e-mailed Alderman
13 Dowell, in which Dowell states, "I see that the
14 NTA parent groups are trying to make a
15 segregation argument. I think we should have
16 an answer for that should it rear its ugly head
17 at the meeting. From my perspective
18 (inaudible) increases diversity of the South
19 Loop Elementary School. If you have time
20 before the meeting, let's discuss."

21 So what's interesting is that
22 Dowell, as alderman, that's passed out as part
23 of the community and as a stakeholder, believes
24 that closing NTA will increase diversity at the

1 South Loop Elementary School, and there is no
2 discussion of this by the alderman on how this
3 proposal will negatively impact NTA. There is
4 no data presented that says that any of these
5 outcomes will be positive for any of the
6 children or communities involved.

7 And I (inaudible) Alderman Dowell
8 quoted in the media saying segregation is not
9 her job, and she was not going to take it on.

10 It is very interesting this is
11 now an argument.

12 Again, I would like for us, the
13 NTA parents that have reached out on several
14 occasions, this is a false choice. NTA does
15 not have to be compromised for us to have a
16 high school that serves each community that is
17 deserving of a high school. And we do not have
18 to accept that.

19 So continue to fight against it.
20 And for those of you that would like to join
21 us, again we still welcome you, and you are
22 welcome to come to NTA as well for elementary
23 school. Thank you.

24 MR. DIAZ: Hello. My name is Eli. I

1 believe I don't have very much to add to the
2 discussion. Everybody is pretty clear on what
3 is being -- what is taking place.

4 The CPS officials do not reflect
5 the society's will. They do not reflect the
6 constituents. They reflect what downtown
7 wants.

8 And I can truly understand that
9 they have to do what's needed to provide
10 sustenance to their family and their
11 well-being.

12 So I ask myself what -- if they
13 are actually listening, what alternatives have
14 they come up with? Have you made any
15 alternatives for NTA being a high school? Or
16 is it the one and only plan that you guys had?
17 And rather than listen to any genuine
18 alternatives, it's just basically again meeting
19 the state mandate that is required of you
20 before you move on to the next option, which is
21 basically closing down.

22 Is there, I ask you, not
23 rhetorically, I ask is there another plan that
24 was neck in neck with closing down NTA that was

1 optioned out? Was there anything else?

2 MR. JOHNSON: I can't answer. I'm not
3 answering.

4 MR. DIAZ: So he is just a hatchet man. I
5 understand.

6 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you for your comments.

7 MR. DIAZ: Thank you very much. And
8 really, I would say vote what's good for the
9 society here. Everybody here has a genuine
10 need, but we don't need to be divided and
11 conquered for somebody else's will and desire.
12 We need something that is genuine.

13 I know your hands are tied. You
14 like your salaries. And you don't want to be
15 pounding the pavement, especially if you don't
16 have the goodwill of downtown.

17 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

18 MR. ADEMOLA: Thank you. Good evening. My
19 name is Kofi Ademola. I'm member of the Black
20 Lives Matter Chicago. I just did a speech
21 yesterday at DuSable Museum connected to the
22 civil rights movement.

23 One thing I pointed out, when Dr.
24 King first came to Chicago to fight against the

1 (inaudible). For those that don't know, at the
2 time of Daley and the superintendent
3 (inaudible) were forcing segregation either
4 though white -- predominant white schools.
5 They had seats available. They wouldn't allow
6 black students to attend there. They built
7 this to pop our children into, right.

8 The reason why I bring that up,
9 because that happens today. Where this is not
10 just racial inequality, this is about profit of
11 the people.

12 I heard time again CPS has money
13 to build a high school for you all.

14 Right now, we're fighting for
15 diverse policing and that. The City has a \$1.4
16 billion budget for policing. That is
17 ridiculous. That money should be directed into
18 the community.

19 We should be opening up a high
20 school. We should be keeping NTA open.

21 So we can't allow them to be non
22 -- and putting two communities together against
23 each other.

24 Diversity is not the truth when

1 we're fighting each other. This is more
2 gentrification. This is (inaudible). They
3 push black people out. We've seen this in
4 Englewood with school closings. We've seen it
5 back in 2010. Please let the two communities
6 come together and fight for this right. Keep
7 NTA open.

8 MR. JOHNSON: Speakers 38 through 42,
9 please line up. Speakers 38 through 42.

10 MS. CLARK: Hi. Good evening. My name is
11 Erica Clark. I'm with Parents for Teachers. I
12 was at the last hearing, all the hearings over
13 the summer. I've been to the hearings at
14 Englewood. And when I left last week's
15 hearing -- whenever I leave hearings or
16 meetings with NTA, I always feel so -- I get in
17 the car, and I'm hopeful and so energized
18 because of the passion and the dedication that
19 you all have to fighting for your school and
20 your families and your children.

21 And then two seconds later,
22 reality sinks in that we're standing there with
23 people from CPS telling you -- telling us that
24 we should be respectful.

1 Well, how is attacking black
2 families in this city, what we're seeing over
3 and over again, like the last speaker just
4 said, here at NTA, down in Englewood, in 2013
5 with all the school closings, how are those
6 attacks respectful?

7 You don't deserve respect. I'm
8 sorry. I know you're doing your job. But CPS
9 does not deserve respect. They are not
10 treating the communities, the black
11 communities, with respect, so what goes around,
12 comes around.

13 And someone asked earlier where
14 is Janice Jackson? Where is Frank Clark?
15 Where is Mayor Rahm Emanuel? Has anyone from
16 NTA had a conversation ever with the mayor?
17 No.

18 So, you know, Janice Jackson is
19 on this PR tour now. She was at City Council
20 last week. She's been going to meetings
21 talking about she's going to turn the page, you
22 know, they made some mistakes. You're darn
23 right you made mistakes. This is a big
24 mistake. And she needs to fix it.

1 So she's talking about wanting to
2 rebuild trust and regain, you know, public
3 credibility. Well, if she really wants to do
4 that, she needs to stop this. She needs to
5 drop this plan right now and put an end to
6 these school closings and these attacks on
7 black parents and black students.

8 MR. JOHNSON: Our next speaker.

9 MR. MCGEE: Good evening, everyone. My
10 name is Larry McGee. I'm from the GAP
11 Community Organization that is just south of
12 here. If there is a chance the school is
13 closing and turned into a high school, you need
14 to go back to 1998. In 1998, the TIF was
15 created under (inaudible) Hickock. All you all
16 are arguing about a school didn't pay nickel
17 for. It is in the Bronzeville TIF. The
18 Bronzeville TIF goes from 22nd Street to 39th
19 Street. Predominantly a black neighborhood who
20 paid for the school who couldn't go to the
21 school. So if there was going to be a high
22 school, all you are welcome to come to our
23 school, because we pay for it.

24 And if you want to know, Freedom

1 of Information Act that was done that showed
2 all of the money to build that school came from
3 black people. Most of you all don't know that,
4 because you're going by Alderman Dowell, who is
5 lovely. You're going by Alderman Tillman, who
6 is lovely. Bob Fioretti who is lovely. But it
7 was all in the 2nd Ward, and it was the
8 Bronzeville TIF that has paid for the school.

9 And all we're asking is whatever
10 you do with it, we want you to move the
11 boundaries inside the TIF, so the people who
12 paid for it, who are African American, can have
13 access to what we paid for. Thank you.

14 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. Next speaker,
15 please.

16 BRENDA: Good evening, everybody. My name
17 is Brenda (inaudible) from NTA. I'm a
18 grandparent at NTA. And my grandkids are part
19 of that first procedure that you all kicked us
20 out of South Loop.

21 And I'll address it. They took
22 the bus service first. They took the bus
23 service. And I just heard you say something
24 about a \$3 million plan that included bus

1 service. Let me say something. Don't pat us
2 on the head. That's a pat on the head. You
3 took it from us in the beginning. Ain't going
4 to give us back and pat us on the head. Stop,
5 please. That's what I want to say about that,
6 because we've been through this before. And
7 it's not fair to the children that you keep
8 running us around like this.

9 You build this new South Loop
10 school building, not for us, it is for the
11 politics.

12 I ain't -- I don't think it's
13 about color. It's about politics.

14 You all politicking with our
15 children's lives. Then when they turn out all
16 bad, you want to politic some more and say they
17 all bad. What you want us to do? We want the
18 Chinese. We want everybody, the high school,
19 but not at the benefit of other children.

20 These kids, the foundation begins
21 when they little. As they grow to teenagers,
22 they disperse, because I can guarantee they
23 ain't all wanting to go to NTA for high school.
24 In a few more years it is going to become a

1 selective enrollment school. Who all going sit
2 there, other kids, you know, lotteries all
3 that. How many years that's going to last that
4 you allow every kid from every neighborhood
5 come here? That's not going to last, because
6 you're going to take the money. The money is
7 coming in the South Loop. It ain't about the
8 skin color. It's about the money you try to
9 get. I know. But don't pat us on the head
10 with this \$3 million plan you just put in
11 place. Find that \$3 million, put it somewhere
12 else, and make sense about it. But don't pat
13 us on the head with this \$3 million I just
14 heard you say.

15 So far Barbara Byrd, where she
16 at? She's locked up. Ain't she?

17 MR. JOHNSON: Speakers 43 through 47.
18 Speakers 43 through 47 line up now.

19 MS. BROOKS: Good evening. My name is
20 Teneka Brooks, and I am the assistant principal
21 at NTA. And I've been silent. And I chose not
22 to say anything every single meeting, but I
23 could not sit still and not come and stand here
24 and speak on behalf of my school. My babies

1 stand here before you, my parents, our
2 community members. What I will say to you is,
3 I challenge Bridgeport families, our Chinatown
4 families, our elected officials sitting here,
5 our CPS officials sitting here, to come, come
6 to NTA. Since March, we've all sat at
7 meetings. We've talked about this. I have not
8 seen anyone come and walk through our doors on
9 any given day. If you walk into our
10 building -- and I know I'm going to go past my
11 time. On any given day, if you walk into our
12 building, it may not be peaches and cream, you
13 might walk through the hallway and may see a
14 student that is upset, irate, irritated, but
15 what you will see along with that is at least
16 four other individuals, and those individuals
17 can range from security guard, a teacher, a
18 fellow classmate that is trying to calm that
19 child down. And the same process that you will
20 see is that child possibly going to a classroom
21 and talk about what is bothering him. Talk
22 about how he could have made a different
23 choice.

24 On any given day, you may walk in

1 and see a group of first graders leading an
2 entire seminar, preparing several different
3 informational texts in a first-grade classroom.

4 You may walk into our building
5 and you may see our middle-school students
6 working with our primary students who are
7 significantly below. You may walk into our
8 building on any given day and see myself, our
9 principal, putting small groups of students
10 that we know is going to make a difference in
11 our achievement (inaudible).

12 You may also see -- you have one
13 other speaker. I ask you to please let me
14 finish.

15 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

16 MS. BROOKS: On any given day, what you
17 will see is a community in our building.

18 No one has taken the time to walk
19 in and see the work we have done in our
20 building and that bothers me. Please take the
21 time and come in and see.

22 MR. JOHNSON: Before our last speaker, I
23 would like to acknowledge our elected officials
24 that have been here from the beginning.

1 Alderman Thompson is here in the audience. And
2 also Alderman Dowell from the 3rd Ward
3 (inaudible) are represented here tonight.
4 Proceed, speaker.

5 MS. COLLASO: My name is Joan Collaso. I'm
6 a resident of Bronzeville/the GAP. And I just
7 simply came here to echo my neighbor, that
8 whatever good thing that you have, certainly
9 should be shared with the young people who live
10 in the GAP area. We have high schools there,
11 public high schools, but we certainly need a
12 better one.

13 Military academy is good. We
14 have Phillips. We have Dunbar. We need a high
15 school that is diverse. That will include our
16 children in that area. We need a grammar
17 school that is diverse that will include our
18 children. Our children can thrive. Our
19 children will thrive. All they need is to be
20 included. That's all I wanted to say.

21 MR. JOHNSON: Speakers 48 through 56. Any
22 speakers with the numbers 48 through 56? You
23 will be our final speakers. You may line up.

24 GRISELDA: Hi. My name is -- I'm too

1 short. My name is Griselda, and I am a woman
2 of faith, and I don't like any negativity, and
3 I don't like all the racial tension that's been
4 going on and the talk. I have been advocating
5 for a new school. We all -- all of our
6 children deserve a quality education beyond
7 eighth grade. And I am an involved parent at
8 my school, which is James Ward. It's a diverse
9 school. It is primarily made up of Asians that
10 are learning English. And being involved there
11 I know two things. I know what it takes to
12 make a 1+ school, and I know the Asian
13 community. I know a 1+ school is not just a
14 bunch of kids getting good test scores. That
15 means that you have children that are willing
16 to learn. They are learning. Teachers that
17 love their job. A whole team comprised of
18 teachers, support staff, getting parents
19 together. It is a community, a thriving
20 community.

21 And also in my school we have a
22 large Asian community, and we lack services to
23 teach our children. We constantly have
24 teachers flying to China to get materials they

1 need. We never received information from CPS
2 in Chinese. So our teachers, our parents have
3 to stay late to communicate with our parents in
4 their native language.

5 So I am here to say that all of
6 our children deserve a quality education. And
7 the Asian community deserves resources it needs
8 so that their children, too, have a fair chance
9 of quality education. Thank you.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Good evening. I'm
11 the parent of Jordan Willis, second grader who
12 attended the RGC program since kindergarten.
13 Everybody knows Jordan.

14 During her educational journey,
15 Jordan has built solid, profound relationships
16 with classmates, educators, ancillary staff, as
17 well as with other parents. Not only do her
18 classmates attend school together, some of them
19 also take classes together at kid science labs,
20 attend birthday parties together and also plan
21 birthday parties together.

22 And even this past holiday, some
23 of the students attended a Martin Luther King
24 workshop together.

1 We'll speak about how these bonds
2 were solidified in the first place. They were
3 solidified through countless hours of the
4 parents, their Facebook groups, text streams,
5 during assemblies, school trips, during
6 fundraisers. This is how parents have built
7 trustworthy bonds. And this process has -- the
8 children trustworthy bonds, too. Not your
9 average bonds, but powerful bonds, social
10 bonds, which collectively have strengthened our
11 school unit. Okay?

12 How many can call five parents in
13 your child's classroom and ask them to pick up
14 your child at school because you are stuck in
15 traffic? How many of you can ask parents to
16 post a copy of the homework because your child
17 accidentally left her folder at school? How
18 many of you see weekly videos posted by
19 students and teachers that display academic
20 rigor?

21 As a CPS educator, and an alum, I
22 have seen firsthand what works. I'm in the
23 trenches. You can't pull wool over my eyes
24 when it comes to the educational process.

1 And when I (inaudible) to the
2 academic and social, emotional development of
3 children stability.

4 This proposal -- please, this
5 proposal is not in the best interest of the
6 children, it's in the best interest of the
7 state developer, politicians and urban planners
8 who don't care about our children.

9 I have more to say, but I'll
10 close. Please just try to work with us.
11 Please just try. I'm an educator of over 20
12 years. I've seen what works, and this will
13 work.

14 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. Before our next
15 speaker comes, we have about 14 minutes before
16 we conclude this meeting. If you want to speak
17 again, you may register outside and come back.
18 We have room for maybe three to four speakers,
19 though. Thank you. Speaker.

20 MS. MILLER: Hi. My name is Pearl Miller,
21 and I am from NTA, but soon I won't say that,
22 because if you close my school, I have to say
23 that I am from South Loop.

24 Also, I can go to the high

1 school, but my friends in lower grades won't.
2 Also, you take away part of my life if you take
3 away my school.

4 Just because you think it is
5 right, doesn't mean it is right. People who
6 make friends, want to be -- I mean, be able to
7 keep them and see them through.

8 MR. JOHNSON: Next speaker. Also, if you
9 can line up this way, please.

10 MS. SHELTON: Hi. My name is Olivia
11 Shelton. I live in Long Grove. I'm a
12 grandmother. I'm an old-school grandmother.
13 Anything goes wrong with my grandson, I'm on
14 it.

15 What I like about NTA, they are
16 family. Anything go down, Ms. Brown, the
17 office, the teacher, it doesn't matter, because
18 it happens in science, math, everybody is
19 involved. And that's what I like about NTA,
20 the whys. Why does my grandson want to be on
21 time? Every single day. Why does my grandson
22 want to have perfect attendance? He never
23 wants to miss.

24 I'm older. I'm retired. I get

1 my grandson up every morning at 6:30 because he
2 moves a little slow. He has to take a shower.
3 He has to be ready. He has to get to school on
4 time. There's no exceptions, because they want
5 him to be at a high standard. He has to be
6 accountable. You have to be accountable.

7 I worked with people hand in
8 hand. If the teachers said it back in the day,
9 it's true. You don't get to say, oh, no,
10 that's not -- uh-uh, we work together.

11 And Ms. Brown said you did it,
12 you did it. And that's -- you have to tell
13 that child right there. You have to respect,
14 you have to respect authority. You have to
15 hold yourself up at a high standard. If you
16 can get a C, you can get a B. If you can get a
17 B, you can get an A. You know, do your best.

18 But I'm a grandmother. It's
19 rough. I get up and walk him every single day,
20 because this child loves NTA. I watch
21 everybody. I watch the principal. I watch the
22 teachers. I'm a looker. J.P., he's awesome
23 with the kids. And I appreciate all of you.

24 This is our family right here.

1 So, come on now, work with us. And whatever
2 you do, pray. Thank you.

3 MR. JOHNSON: Next speaker.

4 MR. TOERNE: Hello. My name is Ted Toerne.
5 I live in the University Village neighborhood.
6 I drove from my job in Oak Lawn and will return
7 there after the meeting because I think it's
8 important for me to say something.

9 I attended the meeting last week
10 hoping to run into my alderman to lobby with my
11 neighborhood to be included into the new high
12 school catchment area.

13 What I heard within the rhetoric
14 were two important things. First, NTA clearly
15 services its population exceedingly well, as
16 leaders and teachers have created an
17 environment, programming that serves and
18 supports students wonderfully.

19 The school is successful by every
20 method. Its students are inspired, thriving
21 there. Not one person involved with the school
22 wants to merge into the South Loop. Too many
23 of the NTA students will get lost in the South
24 Loop environment, which is not being designed

1 for their specific needs.

2 Merging the (inaudible) schools
3 is good. Displacing the NTA students into
4 South Loop School is wrong. The plan to
5 convert NTA into a high school is terribly
6 flawed. The facility was built as an
7 elementary school and won't function as a
8 school for older students.

9 Additionally, the numbers
10 presented by CPS don't add up. They're based
11 on inaccurate margins.

12 This high school will be
13 overcrowded within years, and we'll be right
14 back here again fighting CPS too soon. There
15 are obviously better alternatives. For
16 example, the Central City High School proposal
17 and the empty Little Italy, Addams/Medill area
18 adjacent to the (inaudible) athletic complex
19 announced to be built there.

20 No one can look objectively at
21 the NTA proposal and agree with it.
22 Unfortunately, it seems to be a fait accompli.

23 If this plan moves forward, it
24 will be a shame on Chicago. Thanks for your

1 attention.

2 MS. BOSTON: Hello, everybody. Good
3 evening. My name is Shantel Boston. And I'm a
4 parent of three students of NTA. And I'm just
5 coming to speak on behalf of -- my children
6 couldn't be here today. One of my children, he
7 had suggested to me, he said why is it that CPS
8 doesn't try to build another school? His name
9 is Javion. And he said, Why is it they don't
10 take the time to try and build another school?
11 Why take our school? He said, If they need
12 help building another school, I'll help.

13 And it's sad that our children
14 have to constantly fight to keep something
15 that, like I said, is -- I feel is a great
16 place. Because I grew up in the suburbs, and I
17 tell my kids all the time that schools that I
18 went to, if you had an issue, they were quick
19 to send you to an alternative school. They
20 won't give you as many chances as I have seen
21 the staff at NTA give my child. And, yes, I do
22 have a problem child. But I pray for him
23 daily. And he is going to be great one day.
24 Hopefully soon.

1 But I work for the City, and I'm
2 in a constant fight for just treatment on my
3 job. And to hear the proposal that's here now,
4 it's just like -- it just never ends. And
5 this -- I always viewed Chicago as a great city
6 from growing up in the suburbs. And we used to
7 make a summer trip every summer just to come
8 out here to view the sites and ride the train,
9 and it's like just living here, it has -- it's
10 not what I thought it to be.

11 And I just -- like the last lady
12 said, all we can do is continue to pray and
13 just have faith and just keep fighting. Thank
14 you.

15 MR. McDERMOTT: Good evening. My name is
16 John McDermott. And one of the key injustices
17 that we as a City have to come to terms with is
18 that the plan for transformation of public
19 housing in Chicago was started in '99, so we're
20 now 18 years into a ten-year plan. That plan
21 has only resulted in less than half of the
22 replacement of public housing units that were
23 promised actually being built 18 years later.
24 And I know this from personal experience. I

1 had a chance to work closely with the residents
2 and former residents and neighbors of the
3 Lathrop Homes on the north side. And in that
4 case, the CHA initially promised that rehab
5 would begin in 2001, and just is beginning this
6 summer, this past fall.

7 So there was this immense period
8 of limbo, practically a generation long, 17, 18
9 years.

10 That same thing has happened at
11 the Ickes Homes.

12 I know from experience that
13 Lathrop Homes, as the population went down and
14 the local school was closed, it became very
15 difficult for families to imagine coming back
16 to Lathrop or new families coming to Lathrop
17 because the local school was gone.

18 You have the opportunity to avoid
19 that. You have a wonderful local elementary
20 school that is directly adjacent to the Ickes
21 site. The CHA has announced redevelopment is going
22 to begin. Don't miss this opportunity to make
23 that redevelopment include a great elementary
24 school on-site. And don't let outside

1 forces -- these communities that are
2 represented here tonight, you deserve both, a
3 new high school and to keep NTA and make it
4 stronger. Don't let anybody from the outside
5 deprive you from the other.

6 MS. UN: Hi, everyone. My name is Angela.
7 I work for the Coalition for better
8 Chinese-American Community. And I just wanted
9 to address something that I heard, which was
10 the lack of, like, presence of the Chinese
11 community.

12 I just want people to know that,
13 like, a lot of the community members have
14 different opinions. And a lot of them are
15 sympathetic. A lot of people, they just don't
16 know about it. But, like, we do try to --
17 obviously organizations try to -- we've been
18 doing the assessments, and we do try to get the
19 community members out, but, like, a lot of the
20 problem is the language access issue. And I
21 just want people to -- parents to realize that.
22 Like, for example, no one is going to volunteer
23 at Phillips. First of all, it's sort of
24 like -- everybody's parents are going to stay

1 within whatever geographical boundaries you
2 might feel comfortable with language wise.
3 Unless, like, that's just not something that
4 people are going to, like, consider in the list
5 of priorities of things, because you're just
6 really, like, working. That's not to say that,
7 like, that shouldn't be happening, that should
8 be happening, but, like, political opposites is
9 so limited. Getting people to register to vote
10 is just so hard because of the language
11 barrier. So I think that some groups are
12 trying, some groups aren't. But I think that
13 ultimately we all like want to not be quiet or
14 absent, to really work together and have like
15 better engagement and be able to speak for
16 ourselves.

17 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. I would like say
18 that if you have additional questions or
19 comments, you may send them to
20 transitions@cps.edu. And also find
21 presentations at the website
22 www.cps.edu/transitions.

23 Let me make these final
24 announcements. On Monday, January 29th, we

1 will have the public hearing from 6:00 to 8:30
2 at 42 West Madison in front of the judge.

3 So that's the public hearing
4 January 29th, from 6:00 to 8:30.

5 Again, I'd like to acknowledge
6 those who were present here from the beginning,
7 Alderman Thompson from the 11th Ward was here.
8 Alderman Pat Dowell from the 3rd Ward. Also
9 Principal Castelaz from NTA and principal Tara
10 Shelton from South Loop.

11 Thank you, all. Be careful going
12 home.

13 (WHEREUPON, the proceedings
14 were adjourned at 8:00 p.m.)
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1 STATE OF ILLINOIS)
2) SS:
3 COUNTY OF C O O K)
4

5 MAUREEN A. WOODMAN, C.S.R., being first
6 duly sworn, says that she is a court reporter
7 doing business in the City of Chicago; that she
8 reported in shorthand the proceedings had at
9 the hearing of said cause; that the foregoing
10 is a true and correct transcript of her
11 shorthand notes, so taken as aforesaid, and
12 contains all the proceedings of said hearing.
13
14
15

16 MAUREEN A. WOODMAN, CSR
17 License No. 084.002740
18
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A	acknowledge	6:23	alderman	Angela 98:6	April 23:5
Aaron 30:13	85:23 100:5	administra...	22:3 31:5	angry 49:8	39:10
able 15:20	act 33:10	2:1 25:20	39:24 73:12	annex 32:22	area 22:9,9
16:23 17:1	81:1	46:1	73:22 74:2	announced	23:3,11,15
17:2 32:24	acted 33:16	admired	74:7 81:4,5	94:19 97:21	34:1 36:3
33:1 35:23	action 5:10	25:20	86:1,2	announce...	43:15,16,21
36:2,10,15	5:18 6:16	admitting	93:10 100:7	3:11 6:7	44:8,22
37:6 41:14	6:19 23:20	68:22	100:8	67:7	58:6 59:16
45:1 52:15	32:7 39:2,5	admonition	aldermen 7:5	announce...	68:23 86:10
52:21 62:22	58:20	47:23	48:6	99:24	86:16 93:12
65:1 70:4	actions 6:1,3	adore 49:17	alliance 23:8	announcing	94:17
71:22 72:9	6:4 14:10	adulthood	allocated	6:4	arguing
91:6 99:15	activist 63:19	45:4	38:16	annual 54:19	80:16
ably 72:3	activities	advantage	allow 3:17,24	answer 4:22	argument
absent 99:14	14:7 61:23	25:24	53:3 77:5	38:24 39:7	45:15,17
academic	add 18:13	advise 23:4	77:21 83:4	46:9,10,18	68:24 73:15
42:3 53:24	75:1 94:10	advocating	allowing 8:19	69:2 73:16	74:11
54:2 67:5	Addams/M...	87:4	52:4	76:2	Armour 7:3
89:19 90:2	94:17	affiliated	alongside	answering	38:14,19
academy 1:4	addition 4:14	47:9,21	51:19	76:3	43:22
3:7 26:8	5:20 15:4	aforesaid	alternative	anticipated	article 59:18
39:16 41:18	32:14	101:10	56:16 95:19	23:1	articles 53:22
60:22 86:13	additional	afraid 59:4	alternatives	anybody 46:3	Asian 37:16
accept 74:18	6:11 99:18	African 24:8	24:2,3	98:4	69:10 87:12
access 10:23	Additionally	37:16 38:2	32:15 75:13	anymore	87:22 88:7
11:16 42:9	94:9	46:13 72:4	75:15,18	48:9	Asians 38:2
64:8 72:3	address 18:2	81:12	94:15	apart 21:11	43:23 87:9
81:13 98:20	19:9 22:7	afternoon	alum 89:21	21:16 71:18	asked 18:8
accidentally	36:5 37:6	28:20 60:20	amazing	apartment	19:24 20:2
89:17	47:20 56:4	70:3	20:11	61:21	38:23 59:14
accompli	81:21 98:9	age 45:3	amazingly	appeared	79:13
94:22	addressed	57:12 71:21	18:10	53:15	asking 48:3
accountabi...	57:9,16	agency 17:11	American	applaud 34:4	81:9
49:5	addressing	ago 3:16	24:8 37:16	Applause	asks 46:7
accountable	65:23	38:12 43:16	38:3 46:13	29:12 35:15	assemblies
65:1 92:6,6	Ademola	43:19	72:4 81:12	appreciate	89:5
achieved	76:18,19	agree 4:11	Americans	17:5 92:23	assessments
23:12 24:15	adequately	94:21	41:5	appreciated	98:18
achievement	54:22	agrees 73:3	Amundsen	4:13	asset 58:15
53:19 54:1	adjacent	ain't 15:11	37:24	appropriate	58:18
54:7 85:11	94:18 97:20	82:3,12,23	analysis 24:1	10:6 58:18	assist 14:16
achieveme...	adjourned	83:7,16	32:8,16,19	58:20	assistant
67:6	100:14	air 28:7	72:13	approve 6:19	50:12 61:2
achieving	adjust 7:20	Albritton	ancillary	approxima...	83:20
54:21	adjustments	60:24	88:16	4:3	association

22:16 34:13 assumptions 15:17 athletic 94:18 attacking 79:1 attacks 79:6 80:6 attainment 44:1 attempt 28:2 attempting 32:11 attempts 28:16 attend 8:22 13:13 15:20 41:13,14 62:23 77:6 88:18,20 attendance 37:15 91:22 attended 17:22 22:10 22:13 36:22 47:12 88:12 88:23 93:9 attending 28:11 33:4 attention 95:1 attest 43:20 attract 72:1 attributed 53:18 attributes 45:13 audience 12:14,15 13:7,19 16:5,8,19 58:5,13 86:1 Audrey 50:11 authority	92:14 available 4:21 5:22 68:23 77:5 Avenue 1:7 average 89:9 avoid 97:18 avoided 32:9 aware 21:24 22:1 59:15 awareness 71:5 awesome 92:22 <hr/> B B 92:16,17 babies 83:24 back 5:12 17:7 25:7 26:21 30:22 31:9 53:4 57:6 60:7 60:16 63:23 68:2 78:5 80:14 82:4 90:17 92:8 94:14 97:15 bad 53:5 82:16,17 balance 64:5 Band-Aid 29:1 62:17 bang 66:13 Barbara 22:4 22:5 39:20 60:8 83:15 barrier 99:11 based 15:17 53:22 94:10 basic 3:14 basically 28:2 41:11 75:18 75:21 basis 28:14	beautiful 24:9 began 6:2 31:7 beginning 34:16 82:3 85:24 97:5 100:6 begins 72:14 82:20 behalf 3:12 17:10 29:21 83:24 95:5 believe 25:7 28:24 29:1 30:6 36:13 36:16 75:1 believes 73:23 belongs 68:17 benefit 82:19 best 90:5,6 92:17 Beth 26:15 better 51:24 52:18 86:12 94:15 98:7 99:15 beyond 10:1 55:11 87:6 big 63:23 79:23 bigotry 41:6 bike 19:24,24 20:2 billion 77:16 birth 57:21 birthday 88:20,21 bit 34:2 black 16:8 23:14 24:9 25:6 48:17 48:21 52:7 53:19,24	54:9,11,12 54:20 55:3 55:5,6 57:24 58:1 60:1 62:10 76:19 77:6 78:3 79:1 79:10 80:7 80:7,19 81:3 Blackmon 2:6 4:18 blacks 55:1 bless 64:13 blocks 61:13 61:17 62:4 board 3:9,18 6:15,18,20 22:20 24:14 26:24 27:10 28:17 34:14 48:8 63:24 64:5 67:11 70:23 Bob 81:6 body 38:2 44:9 71:19 bonding 64:7 bonds 89:1,7 89:8,9,9,10 Boone 2:3 4:16 born 43:15 61:11 Boston 95:2,3 bothering 84:21 bothers 85:20 boundaries 7:17 8:13 10:14,15 12:23 13:9 37:15 65:7 81:11 99:1 boundary 1:3	3:6 7:23,24 8:14 12:1,2 12:3,3,11 12:12,19,20 13:10,12 15:18,20 17:13 44:14 56:14 59:15 59:23 bow 65:17 Brenda 81:16 81:17 Bridgeport 7:4 38:14 38:20 43:17 43:22 63:19 63:21 65:5 65:8 69:24 71:14 84:3 brief 3:20 5:9 bring 22:22 53:4 77:8 Brittany 17:10 29:20 broader 5:24 Bronzeville 7:4 34:3 38:20 49:15 67:15 80:17 80:18 81:8 Bronzeville... 86:6 Brooks 83:19 83:20 85:16 brother 21:10,13 49:24 brown 23:15 57:22 91:16 92:11 buck 66:13 budget 14:6 77:16 budgets 14:1 66:1	build 29:6,7 33:2 62:21 68:15 77:13 81:2 82:9 95:8,10 building 14:8 25:21,22 61:21 82:10 84:10,12 85:4,8,17 85:20 95:12 buildings 19:7 21:14 66:4 71:20 built 26:17 58:15 72:10 77:6 88:15 89:6 94:6 94:19 96:23 bunch 31:20 62:14 87:14 bunk 31:20 Bunny 31:3 bus 63:8 81:22,22,24 Bush 70:20 70:20 business 101:6 buying 18:20 Byrd 83:15 Byrd-Benn... 22:4 39:21 60:9 <hr/> C C 25:16 92:16 101:2 C.S.R 101:4 cafes 42:3 Caleb 60:20 60:21 call 89:12 called 20:19 34:24 57:18
--	---	---	---	---	--

34:21 62:20	certified	72:21 76:20	52:2,16	75:2	82:13 83:8
calm 84:18	34:13	76:24 94:24	69:6,24	clearly 60:15	combine 56:8
Canaryville	CHA 22:18	96:5,19	71:14 84:3	66:23 68:9	combined
65:9	22:18,20	101:6	Chinese	93:14	67:15
capacity	97:4,21	chief 3:3	57:21 63:7	clicked 33:7	combining
15:15 41:13	chair 38:22	26:22 31:7	82:18 88:2	Climate	56:9
capital 38:13	challenge	31:14	98:10	14:12	come 17:24
Capitalism	84:3	child 19:7	Chinese-A...	Clinton 42:18	38:15 41:13
55:9	challenges	47:2 53:9	98:8	close 25:4,17	43:24 62:24
captures 16:7	42:5 71:8	53:11 70:17	Chip 2:2 3:3	25:22 31:8	63:6,7,16
car 78:17	chance 5:11	73:1 84:19	35:22 60:15	33:11 44:20	74:22 75:14
card 5:12	36:24 51:10	84:20 89:14	61:5	90:10,22	78:6 80:22
cards 5:16	51:12 52:6	89:16 92:13	choice 42:10	closed 24:6	83:5,23
care 34:5	52:10,16	92:20 95:21	74:14 84:23	45:15,17	84:5,5,8
64:19 70:10	80:12 88:8	95:22	choices 13:4	97:14	85:21 90:17
90:8	97:1	child's 89:13	49:13 73:10	closed-door	93:1 96:7
cared 34:9	chances	children	choose 24:2	72:21	96:17
careful	95:20	17:17 18:4	25:8	closely 97:1	comes 56:17
100:11	change 1:3	18:21 19:6	chose 83:21	closing 25:19	56:19 79:12
case 41:22	12:1,4	21:21 23:11	church 1:6	52:14 73:24	89:24 90:15
97:4	13:15 33:21	26:14 29:16	4:8,10 58:7	75:21,24	comfortable
Castelaz	55:14,15	36:10,21	city 29:3,14	80:13	57:17 99:2
39:24 100:9	59:15,24	44:24 48:3	46:3 48:7	closings 78:4	coming 14:3
catchment	changed	48:14,17	77:15 79:2	79:5 80:6	70:24 73:2
93:12	56:14	49:14,15,20	79:19 94:16	closure 51:17	83:7 95:5
Catherine	changes 8:7	50:8 52:9	96:1,5,17	closures	97:15,16
40:20,21	9:4	68:6,11,15	101:6	48:15 67:12	comment 4:1
Caucasian	changing	70:7,12,17	civil 76:22	67:13,22	4:12 5:10
52:5	32:6	71:9 74:6	Clark 78:10	clout 46:16	5:12 16:11
cause 101:8	chanting	77:7 78:20	78:11 79:14	Coalition	comments
CC 39:20	12:15 16:8	82:7,19	class 25:15	98:7	5:6,13,15
CC'd 39:20	charter 66:1	86:16,18,18	31:17 44:11	cold 62:3	16:4 18:2
celebrate	66:13	86:19 87:6	classes 20:21	collaborative	76:6 99:19
48:1,2	check 37:19	87:15,23	21:2 88:19	72:17	commissio...
center 11:7	64:4	88:6,8 89:8	classmate	Collaso 86:5	69:23
Central	Chicago 1:1	90:3,6,8	84:18	86:5	commitment
94:16	1:7 2:1	95:5,6,13	classmates	collectively	53:10 72:14
CEO 3:13,17	16:13 22:5	children's	69:8 88:16	89:10	committee
6:14 22:5	26:7,8	82:15	88:18	college 34:12	7:10 54:16
24:24 27:4	32:15 34:7	China 87:24	classroom	63:20	committees
27:8 28:7	34:11,14,15	Chinatown	34:20 84:20	college-age	13:23
28:15 31:10	37:11 39:21	7:4 36:22	85:3 89:13	57:23	common 19:5
39:21 59:10	44:8 46:3	37:2,9	Claypool	colonial	communic...
certainly	47:15 49:11	38:12 43:21	24:19 31:9	20:13,14	88:3
86:8,11	53:18 69:7	44:22 49:14	clear 23:19	color 50:10	communities

6:22,24 14:4 18:3 71:18 74:6 77:22 78:5 79:10,11 98:1 community 1:3 2:2 3:4 3:10 5:7,21 6:6,8 7:1,3 7:8,10 8:1,5 14:8 16:7 17:18,23 21:17,19 26:24 27:2 28:17 29:22 30:19 31:19 31:22 34:1 39:2 41:15 45:19,24 47:3,10 49:8 51:22 52:24 53:4 53:11 58:7 58:15,17,18 58:19 64:22 69:17 71:3 71:15,18 72:8,9 73:23 74:16 77:18 80:11 84:2 85:17 87:13,19,20 87:22 88:7 98:8,11,13 98:19 commute 15:3 compare 20:23 complete 31:20 completely 60:12 complex	94:18 comply 27:6 components 8:9 comprised 7:10 14:12 87:17 compromise 25:9 compromis... 73:4 74:15 computer 42:8,9 concern 23:4 concerned 42:7 concerns 71:17 conclude 90:16 conducted 7:7 confirmed 32:2 connected 41:6 76:21 conquered 76:11 conscience 55:11 Conservato... 26:7 consider 57:14 99:4 considerati... 67:11 considerati... 10:7 constant 96:2 constantly 87:23 95:14 constituents 40:11 75:6 construction 18:24 23:1	contain 9:19 9:24 10:2 contains 101:11 continually 24:10 continue 8:4 16:17 68:5 71:23 73:9 74:19 96:12 continued 24:24 45:3 continues 26:23 67:8 conversation 40:18 60:7 70:5 79:16 conversatio... 5:2 40:3 conversion 8:16 9:3,16 convert 21:7 30:21 94:5 converting 8:17 23:21 39:17 Cooper 25:13 25:14 coordinators 14:16 copy 89:16 Corey 51:15 Corley 55:17 55:18 correct 101:9 costs 32:9 council 38:22 48:7 79:19 counselors 41:17 count 20:8 countless 89:3 country 53:16 55:2	62:12 72:13 COUNTY 101:2 couple 57:7 course 5:8 41:2 court 101:5 CPS 5:13 6:2 6:7 16:6 19:5 23:22 23:24 24:1 24:12,22 25:4 27:3 28:18 30:19 30:21 31:24 32:9,10 35:21 36:13 36:22 37:9 37:13,14,21 38:13 39:2 40:3 42:14 45:8 46:19 47:12,13 49:6 51:17 51:20 53:10 53:15 54:1 54:2 56:4 56:13,20 57:11 60:15 65:24 66:1 66:10,11 69:23 70:23 72:18 75:4 77:12 78:23 79:8 84:5 88:1 89:21 94:10,14 95:7 CPS' 24:16 37:9 38:18 cps.edu/tra... 5:19,22 cream 84:12 create 29:2 38:18	created 47:3 71:7 80:15 93:16 creates 37:10 creation 14:11 credibility 80:3 criteria 32:8 Crosby 35:11 35:16 42:18 42:18 culture 7:19 14:8,12 71:5 current 7:23 8:14 10:14 10:15 12:3 12:12,20 15:17 37:14 65:7 69:12 69:14 currently 22:24 28:22 37:3 44:12 <hr/> D <hr/> dad 61:12 daddies 43:2 daily 70:9 95:23 Daley 77:2 dangerous 62:2 darn 79:22 data 15:16,17 27:5,13,14 27:21 54:2 54:4,16 74:4 dated 23:5 daughter 17:22 18:24 46:6 57:20 57:23 68:19	daughter's 46:5 daughters 28:21 David 22:9 36:20 55:19 55:23 63:18 63:18 day 18:5,17 20:14 48:24 56:22 57:15 59:6,7 84:9 84:11,24 85:8,16 91:21 92:8 92:19 95:23 days 5:23 dealing 25:10 debate 45:11 Debbie 43:14 43:14 debt 63:20 decade 38:16 December 3:8,9 6:5 decide 11:4 decided 41:19 decision 25:4 53:13 54:23 decisions 49:2,3 57:10 declarations 60:3 dedication 78:18 deemed 28:19 deems 58:17 defenseless 70:11 definitely 29:2 degree 47:14
--	--	--	---	--	---

62:3	developer	discussion	divided 76:10	due 27:23	educator
deliberate	22:21 90:7	3:19 30:17	doctorate	duly 101:5	89:21 90:11
28:16	developing	31:8,10	47:17	Dunbar	educators
demand	13:21	72:16 74:2	doing 18:1	86:14	88:16
38:24 39:5	development	75:2	23:24 30:20	DuSable	effects 67:3,4
Demar 49:23	14:24 17:12	disgraced	43:10 50:6	76:21	effort 39:13
democracy	90:2	24:18	50:14 61:3	Duval 22:9	efforts 58:9
64:14,15	developme...	dishearteni...	61:9,10,24		egg 22:14
demograph...	57:2	28:1	79:8 98:18	E	30:24
37:12,20	Devonte	disperse	101:6	e-mail 5:13	eight 18:20
Department	61:18,19	82:22	dollars 65:24	22:3 23:5	26:5
4:19	DIAZ 74:24	dispersed	dominate	31:5,14	eighth 87:7
deplored	76:4,7	37:5	72:23	39:24	either 9:10
41:7	difference	displace	doomed	e-mailed	19:3 21:13
deprive 98:5	85:10	29:16	55:12	73:12	77:3
described	different 19:6	displaced	door 59:5	e-mails 7:13	elected 40:17
66:22	21:14 34:8	48:15 67:20	doors 84:8	21:23	49:5 84:4
deserve 49:14	34:17 43:16	displacement	doubled	earlier 35:22	85:23
49:15 64:2	45:2,23	67:3,5,9	56:24	79:13	elementary
64:22,24	48:23 51:12	Displacing	Dowell 22:4	early 45:3	7:18 8:9
79:7,9 87:6	51:13 62:11	94:3	31:5 39:10	Easter 22:14	9:22 10:5
88:6 98:2	64:18 65:15	display 89:19	40:1,12,17	30:24 31:3	10:22 11:15
deserves 30:1	71:20 72:15	disproporti...	73:11,13,13	echo 86:7	11:24 12:5
30:2,6 88:7	84:22 85:2	55:5	73:22 74:7	economic	12:6 13:13
deserving	98:14	disproporti...	81:4 86:2	41:6,8	15:3,8 22:8
74:17	difficult	54:20	100:8	55:10	23:13 24:5
designed 14:7	13:16 97:15	disrespect	downtown	educated	25:5 39:15
93:24	dignity 68:13	16:18	75:6 76:16	25:22	40:5,24
desire 23:10	digress 59:9	disruptive	Dr 3:13 6:14	education 2:2	54:7 55:4
76:11	directed	47:22	27:11 32:2	3:4 17:14	59:19 60:1
desk 5:15	77:17	distinct 44:8	39:20 48:1	17:17 18:22	62:14 68:1
desperate	directing	distributed	48:2 59:10	26:22 30:2	71:21 72:10
24:19	30:21	64:3	59:14,22	30:3 34:6	73:19 74:1
desperately	directive	diverse 2:3,5	73:12 76:23	42:21 43:7	74:22 94:7
66:17	23:22 24:20	4:15 37:10	draft 6:3 7:24	44:5 47:16	97:19,23
destabilize	25:2 27:6	38:19 44:9	13:24	50:4 51:8	elephant
68:5	directly	49:9,11	Drake 7:2	51:24 53:12	65:23
destroy 18:21	18:10 97:20	56:18 77:15	drastic 24:3	56:10 68:6	Eli 74:24
21:19	directs 25:11	86:15,17	drive 18:16	69:21 73:5	Eliminating
details 9:1	disadvanta...	87:8	59:5	87:6 88:6,9	54:24
determined	71:20	diversity	driven 72:21	educational	Elizabeth
45:22	disagree 4:11	51:13 68:11	drop 80:5	24:11 44:19	38:21
develop 23:2	discuss 73:20	73:18,24	dropped	88:14 89:24	else's 76:11
developed	discussed	77:24	67:17	educations	eludes 38:17
13:24 31:19	31:15	divide 62:22	drove 93:6	52:21 53:3	Emanuel

39:11 79:15 emotional 90:2 employee 45:8 46:19 employees 49:6 empty 94:17 encourage 4:5 21:1 ends 53:1 96:4 energized 78:17 engaged 6:22 13:17,20 48:5,6 engagement 2:2 3:4,10 6:6 7:14 99:15 engages 71:8 Englewood 52:14 78:4 78:14 79:4 English 44:3 87:10 enhance 52:17 enroll 35:24 enrolled 52:6 enrolling 9:5 enrollment 10:23 11:17 15:15,18 28:10 31:16 41:23,24 83:1 ensure 10:4 16:6 entire 46:3 47:13 49:10 85:2 environment 71:8 93:17	93:24 equal 30:3,7 equality 27:3 equitable 32:8 equity 13:5 32:16,16,19 72:12,14 Erica 78:11 especially 76:15 essence 31:24 established 45:23 estimates 57:11 ethic 37:23 ethical 25:9 ethnic 38:5,8 Eve 47:8 evening 17:9 33:24 35:11 40:20 45:5 47:7 59:1 61:18 66:20 76:18 78:10 80:9 81:16 83:19 88:10 95:3 96:15 event 41:22 events 14:7 eventually 11:7 72:2 everybody 50:1,5,7,7,9 50:11,12,13 50:24 62:13 66:21 67:2 70:13,14 75:2 76:9 81:16 82:18 88:13 91:18 92:21 95:2 everybody's 98:24	evidence 23:6 23:19 40:16 Ewing 47:7,8 49:19 exact 37:12 examine 54:5 example 12:8 20:13 94:16 98:22 examples 14:19 exceedingly 93:15 exceptions 92:4 exchange 23:7 excited 17:12 exciting 20:12 excuse 12:23 58:10,21 exist 19:15 existence 70:9 expand 12:2 expanding 7:22 8:12 expansion 40:5 expected 54:19 55:6 experience 45:3 56:10 72:17 96:24 97:12 experienced 24:10 expert 32:22 explain 8:2 46:6 51:3 57:22 68:20 explained 20:16 explaining	19:23 exploitation 41:6 explore 10:24 11:18 exposed 45:2 express 4:8 eyes 89:23 <hr/> F <hr/> fabricated 27:5,20 fabulous 71:6 face 49:8 69:3 Facebook 41:4 65:13 89:4 faced 65:12 facilitator 70:5 facility 8:11 40:6 94:6 fact 37:19 53:21 65:22 69:1 factual 40:15 fair 30:1,4 46:8,21 56:21 82:7 88:8 fairness 64:3 fait 94:22 faith 87:2 96:13 fall 97:6 false 24:21 49:13 73:10 74:14 falsely 24:14 familiar 39:19 families 10:24 11:17 13:16 17:16	19:5 21:8 21:11,18 24:4,10 25:7,10,23 43:2,21 44:4,4,4 52:6 56:18 60:16,17 66:22 67:20 67:24 78:20 79:2 84:3,4 97:15,16 family 2:2 3:3 20:10 33:7 46:6 50:5 51:9 56:17 75:10 91:16 92:24 family's 56:12 far 30:3,22 31:9 41:15 83:15 faster 53:15 father 18:5 36:21 57:21 57:24 favor 56:7 65:6 favoritism 64:3,6,9 February 6:20 fed 19:5 feedback 3:18 6:11 6:23 7:15 7:22 8:1,4 15:14 16:7 30:19 64:11 feel 51:3,4,19 78:16 95:15 99:2 feels 34:21 Feldstein	31:2 fellow 84:18 felt 52:8 72:18 fidelity 4:9 fifth 28:13 60:21 fight 25:7 74:19 76:24 78:6 95:14 96:2 fighting 65:20 66:3 66:16 77:14 78:1,19 94:14 96:13 fill 5:12 final 86:23 99:23 find 42:12 56:8 83:11 99:20 finds 22:18 fine 19:17,20 finish 32:17 51:5 63:15 85:14 Fioretti 81:6 first 17:8,23 25:14 26:16 27:10 31:16 45:7 59:2,6 73:2 76:24 81:19,22 85:1 89:2 93:14 98:23 101:4 first-grade 85:3 firsthand 89:22 five 5:23 7:9 16:15,16,18 16:20,21 40:12 89:12
---	---	--	---	--	--

flawed 94:6	62:4,22	gather 8:4	goes 79:11	86:13 87:14	86:16
flow 55:9	71:19 84:16	gem 72:3	80:18 91:13	88:10 94:3	grandfather
flying 87:24	90:18	generation	going 4:6	95:2 96:15	61:20
focus 69:22	fourth 21:22	97:8	16:12 17:1	goodwill 41:5	grandkids
70:1	70:22	generations	17:6,6	76:16	81:18
folder 89:17	Frank 79:14	72:2	26:11 28:9	Gorson 60:20	grandmother
folks 49:12	Freedom	gentrificati...	31:9 40:24	60:21	91:12,12
follow 28:4	80:24	78:2	42:2,20	gotten 21:3	92:18
48:13	Friday 73:11	genuine	43:4,4,5,11	grade 8:20	grandparent
follow-up	friend 72:6	75:17 76:9	46:12 51:23	9:7,7,10,10	81:18
31:4	friend's 20:3	76:12	52:2,3	10:5,18	grandson
followed 5:10	friends 20:8	geographical	55:15 57:6	11:1,8 12:9	91:13,20,21
6:5 30:23	20:22 21:15	99:1	57:8 58:1	12:11,17,19	92:1
30:24 48:13	50:1 91:1,6	getting 66:12	60:7 61:16	17:21 20:9	great 21:19
48:16	front 18:10	87:14,18	61:16 62:9	21:22 28:13	25:16 30:15
following 3:9	100:2	99:9	64:6,7,8	33:4,5	42:10,23
6:7,17 8:24	full 66:15	gifted 11:7	70:15 74:9	42:19 54:21	58:11 95:15
9:4	fully 16:7	24:15 27:17	79:20,21	61:19 87:7	95:23 96:5
forces 98:1	fun 20:13,15	28:10,12	80:21 81:4	grade-level	97:23
forcing 77:3	function 94:7	45:12	81:5 82:3	54:8,11,13	greater 44:22
foregoing	fundraisers	give 17:16	82:24 83:1	54:15	greatness
101:8	89:6	27:5 41:21	83:3,5,6	grader 20:6	45:21
Forget 58:22	funds 38:13	43:9 46:8	84:10,20	23:18 25:14	Greer 38:21
formally 3:7	38:15 58:16	46:10,19,20	85:10 87:4	45:7 59:2,6	38:21
3:8	further 24:4	46:22 52:15	95:23 97:21	60:21 88:11	grew 50:6
formed 6:23	25:1	73:10 82:4	98:22,24	graders 85:1	95:16
former 69:8	future 11:23	95:20,21	99:4 100:11	grades 8:18	Griselda
97:2	26:12 28:3	given 84:9,11	GOLDEN	8:19 9:21	86:24 87:1
forth 60:16	30:7 42:22	84:24 85:8	28:20	9:22,24	group 23:9
fortunate	72:2	85:16	good 17:9	10:2 11:10	38:8 69:22
25:23	futures 42:23	giving 25:21	19:7,19	11:19 12:6	70:1 85:1
forward		46:11 66:1	28:20 33:24	12:22 13:8	groups 7:11
51:23,24	G	glad 34:17	35:8,11	13:9,12	37:23 38:5
94:23	gain 32:12	go 9:1 21:12	40:7,20	91:1	38:11 49:10
forwarded	73:5	21:13,14	45:5 46:9	gradual 9:16	73:14 85:9
28:18	gained 33:12	26:2,5	46:18 47:7	gradually	89:4 99:11
foster 36:12	games 35:5,7	35:23 36:6	49:14,15	9:20	99:12
found 24:7	gang-infest...	36:15 52:4	52:21 53:3	graduated	Grove 26:19
foundation	66:6	52:15,16	59:1 60:20	28:21 35:14	28:8 62:4
82:20	gap 53:24	61:12 62:9	61:18 64:13	36:21	91:11
founded 64:8	54:1,7	68:2 72:2	66:20 67:17	graduating	grow 56:3
four 18:20	80:10 86:6	80:14,20	70:8 76:8	28:11	82:21
28:21 35:14	86:10	82:23 84:10	76:18 78:10	graduation	growing
37:22,24	gaps 53:19	90:24 91:16	80:9 81:16	11:2	49:10 54:22
43:19 61:13	Garfield 26:7	goal 31:15	83:19 86:8	grammar	55:1 56:23

TOOMEY REPORTING
312-853-0648

57:4 70:10 86:15,17 97:23 included 14:6 81:24 86:20 93:11 including 7:1 7:16,19,22 13:22 15:19 21:8 30:14 43:21 incoming 9:6 incorporate 7:23 8:13 44:8 increase 73:24 increases 54:17 73:18 indicating 24:14 individuals 84:16,16 inequality 77:10 inequity 23:24 information 3:14 24:16 28:17 37:13 62:20 81:1 88:1 informatio... 85:3 informed 67:1 initial 7:24 initially 97:4 injustice 41:8 injustices 96:16 input 6:6,13 insane 26:5 inside 62:13 81:11	insinuating 19:14,18 inspired 93:20 integration 14:8 integrity 71:5 intelligent 42:23,24 interest 90:5 90:6 interested 7:16 interesting 73:21 74:10 interim 24:24 Internet 42:9 Interruption 12:14 interviewed 34:14 introduce 3:1 4:7 introduced 3:7 introduction 3:21 invest 41:20 invested 66:8 investing 42:15 investment 23:2 invitation 70:2 involve 40:6 involved 37:13 42:11 55:22 74:6 87:7,10 91:19 93:21 involvement 31:19 involves 8:10 8:16 9:3	irate 84:14 irrefutable 40:15 irritated 84:14 Isaac 39:24 issue 19:8 31:23 39:14 65:3 95:18 98:20 issues 22:12 Italian 62:11 Italy 94:17 <hr/> J J.P 46:2 50:11 92:22 Jackson 3:13 3:17 6:14 24:13,18 26:23 27:9 27:11,20 28:3,7 31:10,10,15 32:2 59:10 59:14,22 73:12 79:14 79:18 Jackson's 24:23 Jacoby 57:17 57:20 58:6 58:11,14,22 59:17 68:18 James 87:8 Janice 3:13 24:13,18,23 26:23 27:8 27:11,20 28:3,6 31:14 79:14 79:18 January 1:5 99:24 100:4 Javion 95:9	Jeff 55:17 Joan 86:5 job 74:9 79:8 87:17 93:6 96:3 jobs 44:3 52:22 53:1 Joey 65:4 John 59:17 96:16 Johnson 2:2 3:1,3 12:16 13:20 15:12 16:6,9,20 17:19 30:11 36:18 47:5 48:24 49:18 49:22 51:5 51:14 53:6 58:10,21,24 60:19 62:6 66:18 76:2 76:6,17 78:8 80:8 81:14 83:17 85:15,22 86:21 90:14 91:8 93:3 99:17 Johnson's 47:23 join 39:13 74:20 joined 41:10 Joint 14:12 joke 31:20 Jordan 88:11 88:13,15 journey 88:14 judge 100:2 July 27:10 June 7:8 22:21 60:6 68:22 73:11	justice 71:6 <hr/> K K 101:2 keep 4:11 20:8 48:11 70:24 78:6 82:7 91:7 95:14 96:13 98:3 keeping 49:19 77:20 Kenny 25:13 key 8:8 9:1 14:5 96:16 kick 30:4 kicked 26:20 67:24 81:19 kicking 59:24 kid 64:12,13 83:4 88:19 kids 20:20 23:15 25:18 25:19 26:19 27:23 28:1 28:8,10 29:1,8 35:23 42:21 42:22 51:9 51:23 52:1 52:1,7,13 52:15 55:1 55:21 56:13 56:20 57:12 58:12 59:20 59:24 62:8 63:13 65:20 66:4 69:3 69:17,18,18 70:18,18,18 70:21 82:20 83:2 87:14 92:23 95:17 kids' 64:24 kin 10:15	kind 65:18 kindergarten 9:6 10:13 10:17 11:8 12:9,11,17 12:19 17:22 18:6 20:7 21:10,22 88:12 King 41:2 48:1,2 55:8 76:24 88:23 know 17:14 18:15 20:21 21:3 27:9 32:23 34:21 36:1 37:12 39:2,7 40:7 42:10 47:18 48:13 52:8 52:18 55:14 59:2,17,21 60:5 61:7 62:13 63:6 66:7,21 67:16,19,23 68:18 76:13 77:1 79:8 79:18,22 80:2,24 81:3 83:2,9 84:10 85:10 87:11,11,12 87:13 92:17 96:24 97:12 98:12,16 knowledge 40:9 knows 46:4 88:13 Kofi 76:19 <hr/> L labor 63:19 labs 88:19
--	--	--	---	--	--

LAC 59:11	left 15:23	Lions 63:21	Long-time	lose 72:3	mamas 43:2
lack 37:1	35:14 40:18	list 70:1 99:4	36:22	losers 69:13	man 76:4
87:22 98:10	59:17,20	listen 13:2	look 44:5	losing 56:18	managed
ladies 69:8	64:9 78:14	35:3 75:17	47:21 51:23	lost 71:4	10:6
lady 50:19	89:17	listening 48:2	51:24 62:13	93:23	management
65:16 96:11	let's 24:17	75:13	64:17 66:12	lot 7:15 52:20	47:17
Lake 59:5	26:14 32:21	little 30:15	94:20	52:23 55:21	mandate
language	32:21 33:2	34:2 36:8	looked 31:24	56:4 58:9	75:19
4:11 88:4	59:9 73:20	42:6 51:9	32:4 37:20	98:13,14,15	Manelope
98:20 99:2	letter 39:9,10	66:16 82:21	looker 92:22	98:19	63:18
99:10	39:12	92:2 94:17	looking 39:6	lots 20:15	March 84:6
LAP 37:7	letterhead	live 8:23 9:14	Loop 7:2,5	21:3	margins
large 7:7	39:11	10:20 15:6	7:22 8:11	lotteries 83:2	94:11
87:22	level 19:11	18:9 26:6	8:12,13,19	loud 15:10	mark 15:24
Larry 80:10	24:15 25:5	35:1,20,21	8:21 9:5,6,8	48:11	Marquez
Lastly 21:6	25:5 27:12	35:24 36:15	9:11 10:11	love 21:17	33:3,3
lasts 68:4	27:16,22	40:22 50:17	10:16,20	43:6,6,7	Martin 41:2
Latasha	29:10,13	69:18 86:9	11:4,9,11	50:7,7	55:8 88:23
72:24	44:19 54:3	91:11 93:5	11:13,22	87:17	Maru 53:8,8
late 88:3	54:21 55:13	lived 34:1,3	12:10,13,18	lovely 81:5,6	master's
Lathrop 97:3	63:20 65:2	61:10	12:21 13:13	81:6	47:15
97:13,16,16	librarian	lives 16:8	13:18,21	loves 59:8	materials
Lawn 93:6	42:13,17	36:6 49:19	14:2,14	92:20	87:24
lax 36:8	License	51:8 61:20	15:3 19:1	low-income	math 18:15
leaders 7:10	101:16	64:24 76:20	21:13 22:8	24:9 44:14	32:22,23
24:22 30:8	lie 28:4	82:15	22:11,14,23	44:17 46:14	42:8 71:12
93:16	lied 27:9	living 2:6	24:5 26:20	59:21 60:1	91:18
leadership	36:17 40:16	4:17 10:13	32:5,21	66:6 72:4	matriculate
14:22	lies 25:1	29:22 48:21	38:20 39:15	low-skilled	15:8
leading 3:10	life 33:6	64:15 96:9	39:15 40:4	44:3	Matsuo 53:8
31:8 85:1	47:13 49:10	lobby 93:10	40:23 41:20	lower 91:1	matter 16:8
learn 20:20	70:8 91:2	local 58:15	53:9 54:7	LSC 41:10	23:3 32:24
25:22 43:5	life-long 69:6	97:14,17,19	54:18 55:4	Luis 2:5 4:17	35:24 36:14
50:9 87:16	likewise	located 10:10	56:1,21,23	Luther 41:2	65:2,22
learners	12:10,18	11:9	57:24 59:16	55:8 88:23	76:20 91:17
43:24	limbo 97:8	location	59:19,24	<hr/>	MAUREEN
learning 2:3	limited 99:9	44:20	62:5 68:1	M	101:4,15
2:5 4:16	Lincoln	locked 83:16	71:14 73:19	Madison	mayor 22:6
20:12 42:1	37:24	logistical	74:1 81:20	100:2	22:13,15
53:15 61:24	line 16:16	14:19	82:9 83:7	maintain 4:9	23:8 24:12
71:7 87:10	18:9 30:12	logistics 3:21	90:23 93:22	7:18 16:14	25:11 30:24
87:16	36:19 47:6	long 26:19	93:24 94:4	majority 25:6	31:2 32:10
leave 46:24	66:19 78:9	28:8 56:3	100:10	43:22 72:4	32:10 39:11
65:8 78:15	83:18 86:23	62:4 69:16	Loop's 11:3	makeup 59:3	60:7 79:15
Lee 69:5,5	91:9	91:11 97:8	12:1	making 15:11	79:16

mayor's 23:22 25:1 27:6 28:5 30:21 31:5 31:7,11,12 31:14 40:3	meetings 3:2 6:8,12 7:8,9 7:11 8:5 17:23 31:22 32:3 41:13 58:7 70:23 72:22 78:16 79:20 84:7	86:13 Miller 28:8 90:20,20 million 14:1 33:1 81:24 83:10,11,13 millions 65:24 mind 48:11 49:19 mine 21:8 69:9 70:13 70:19 minus 62:3 minutes 4:22 15:22 40:12 90:15 mislead 24:14 26:24 28:16 missed 59:7 misses 45:13 mistake 79:24 mistakes 79:22,23 mixed-inco... 29:22,23 MLK 47:24 mobility 44:5 model 8:12 43:23 mom 61:10 moment 3:16 Monday 99:24 money 66:7,8 66:14 77:12 77:17 81:2 83:6,6,8 month 6:10 months 3:9 39:23 morning 92:1 Moskowitz	45:5,6 mother's 36:5 move 60:16 61:11,12,15 61:16 67:6 75:20 81:10 moved 36:3 movement 76:22 moves 92:2 94:23 moving 22:18 43:20 multiple 13:22 Museum 76:21 <hr/> N <hr/> Nadia 21:20 21:20 name 17:9 20:5 21:20 23:17 25:13 26:15 28:20 29:20 35:11 36:20 38:21 40:21 42:18 43:14 45:5 47:8 49:23 51:15 53:8 55:17 60:21 61:19 62:7 65:4 69:5 70:20 74:24 76:19 78:10 80:10 81:16 83:19 86:5 86:24 87:1 90:20 91:10 93:4 95:3,8 96:15 98:6 narrowing 53:20	National 1:4 3:6 34:12 39:16 60:22 native 88:4 near 1:3 17:13 43:15 72:8 nearly 37:5 neck 65:17 75:24,24 need 13:1,4 22:7,8 28:24 29:6 29:18,18 30:18 38:17 42:21 49:1 49:2 58:3,8 62:15,18 63:11 64:20 66:17 68:14 69:15,20 71:15 76:10 76:10,12 80:13 86:11 86:14,16,19 88:1 95:11 needed 75:9 needs 37:6 39:2 56:5 57:15 72:7 79:24 80:4 80:4 88:7 94:1 Neff 4:6 negative 67:4 negatively 74:3 negativity 87:2 Negron 31:7 neighbor 62:9,10,10 86:7 neighborho... 10:12 11:3	11:22 15:19 19:11,16 22:15 23:8 27:15,23 37:1,11,21 38:7 39:17 48:22 54:5 54:10 56:2 56:14,19 58:14 62:23 71:16 80:19 83:4 93:5 93:11 neighborho... 69:24 neighboring 22:16 neighbors 49:17 68:12 97:2 never 19:12 31:24 32:3 41:5 56:3 59:6 88:1 91:22 96:4 new 8:10 14:17 18:23 19:24 20:22 21:15,15 22:22 24:23 29:7,7,19 29:19 33:2 38:13 40:23 53:14,21 57:15 60:4 62:21 82:9 87:5 93:11 97:16 98:3 niblet 66:16 nice 21:5 nickel 80:16 nickname 46:5 Nicole 69:5 73:2
---	---	---	--	--	---

Nine 39:23	36:4,14,15	O	old 21:10	32:1,4	parent 17:20
non 77:21	38:22 39:17	O 101:2,2	32:21 61:20	41:21 44:21	21:21 23:18
north 38:1,4	40:6,8,17	o'clock 4:3,4	old-school	56:11 67:18	30:14 35:13
97:3	42:19,24	Oak 93:6	91:12	71:16 75:20	36:12 40:21
note 5:1,16	45:7,11,15	objectively	older 91:24	optioned	41:19 45:7
note-taker	47:9,21	94:20	94:8	76:1	45:9 46:19
16:3	48:4 50:7	obtain 30:18	oldest 28:12	options 10:24	47:1 51:16
notes 5:5	51:16 53:2	obviously	Olivia 91:10	11:18 32:20	59:2 69:10
101:10	53:9 54:24	31:21 94:15	on-site 97:24	32:20 40:5	70:21,23
notice 15:23	55:4 56:15	98:17	Once 16:12	order 27:5	73:14 87:7
62:8	58:15 59:3	occasions	ones 70:1	30:23 36:6	88:11 95:4
notification	59:8 60:2	27:9 74:14	online 5:22	62:19	parents 7:1
31:22	61:7,21	occur 22:21	Onshelle 2:6	orders 28:5	13:21 14:13
NPEA 23:3	62:17 64:20	occurred	4:18	Organization	20:15 27:2
NTA 7:2,18	66:22 67:19	59:16 60:12	open 41:19	80:11	28:4 29:16
8:16,20,22	67:23 69:9	65:10,16,18	77:20 78:7	organizatio...	34:4,9 35:8
9:5,9,11,12	69:10 70:21	66:2	opening	40:10 98:17	41:12 44:1
9:16,18,20	71:3,4,11	occurs 67:8,9	77:19	organize	44:2 45:19
9:23 10:2,9	71:18,21,22	October 6:3	opens 72:8	55:20	48:4 52:5
10:10,14,16	72:1 73:1,3	offer 10:14	opinion	organized	52:20,23
10:16,19	73:14,24	10:17 12:22	15:12 47:11	55:19	69:9 74:13
11:2,12,20	74:3,13,14	13:8 71:23	47:12,12	outcome	78:11 80:7
12:7,9,17	74:22 75:15	office 2:3,5,8	opinions	44:19 72:18	84:1 87:18
12:22 13:8	75:24 77:20	4:15 10:22	98:14	outcomes	88:2,3,17
13:10,10,17	78:7,16	11:16 23:22	opportuniti...	64:6 74:5	89:4,6,12
13:20 14:2	79:4,16	30:21 31:5	15:1 44:16	outside 18:3	89:15 98:21
14:14 15:2	81:17,18	31:11,12	70:17	20:22 62:3	98:24
15:5 17:21	82:23 83:21	40:3 64:13	opportunity	90:17 97:24	Park 26:7
18:10,24	84:6 90:21	91:17	30:1,3,7	98:4	37:24
20:6,11	91:15,19	officer 3:3	97:18,22	overcrowded	part 3:5 5:24
21:7,9,12	92:20 93:14	26:23 28:18	opposed 65:7	94:13	6:2 15:4
21:16,21	93:23 94:3	60:14	69:12	overcrowdi...	17:11 35:18
22:17 23:12	94:5,21	official 39:11	opposites	22:7 39:14	35:19 69:22
23:18,21	95:4,21	40:17	99:8	56:4,5,9	73:22 81:18
24:7 25:1	98:3 100:9	officially 34:3	opposition	Overt 43:16	91:2
25:10,14,17	NTA's 7:23	officials 49:5	71:3	P	participant
25:19 26:17	8:14 12:2	64:23 75:4	oppression	p.m 1:5	15:22
26:21 27:9	12:12,20	84:4,5	24:11	100:14	participants
27:22 29:9	27:19 31:16	85:23	OPSTAL	PAC 28:23	28:12
30:14,17,21	number	oh 92:9	26:15	page 41:4	participate
31:6,8,11	34:15 54:20	okay 19:13	opting 24:2	79:21	20:16 22:21
31:12 32:5	numbers	20:1 30:5,8	option 9:9	paid 80:20	participated
32:6,11	56:23 57:14	62:8,11,12	10:17,21	81:8,12,13	72:12
33:5 35:13	86:22 94:9	62:15,23	11:14,21	pains 46:16	particular
35:20,23,24		63:4 89:11	13:13 23:13		45:9 65:3

parties 88:20 88:21	70:10 77:11 78:3,23	41:18 42:16 52:15,16,18	78:5,9 81:15 82:5	89:18	presentation 3:22 5:9
partners 21:1	81:3,11	86:14 98:23	85:13,20	6:17 7:17	13:5 61:6
passed 34:12 73:22	86:9 91:5 92:7 98:12	phone 41:3 phonetic 28:9	90:4,10,11 91:9	8:15	presentatio... 99:21
passion 12:24 13:3 78:18	98:15,21 99:4,9	63:18	pledges 53:10	pounding 76:15	presented 74:4 94:10
passionate 66:23,24	people's 18:21	photographs 35:4	plenty 32:20	power 51:20 51:20	president 22:15 31:1
pat 22:4 39:9 40:12,17	percent 24:8 37:16,16,17	pick 89:13 picked 59:3	point 32:17 45:14 51:5	powerful 89:9	51:21 59:12
64:13 73:11	37:17,18	picture 63:23	57:13 65:19	PR 79:19	pretty 75:2
82:1,2,4	38:1,2,3,3,6	pictured 31:2	pointed 76:23	practically 97:8	previous 22:4 24:6 45:20
83:9,12	38:7,9,10	pillar 51:22	points 7:21 23:10 72:6	practices 14:18,24	59:15 67:21
100:8	38:11 44:12	PINAGLIA 65:4	policies 72:20	pray 93:2 95:22 96:12	primarily 87:9
Patricia 35:12	44:13,13	pit 73:9	policing 77:15,16	pre-K 8:18 9:5 10:10	primary 85:6
Patrick 55:19 55:23	48:16 55:2 57:1,24	pitting 49:12	policy 31:7 31:14 47:16	predetermi... 72:19	principal 14:15 25:16
pattern 53:18	perfect 91:22	placard 35:5	politic 82:16	56:15	39:23 40:4
pavement 76:15	performance 27:16	place 5:8 29:8 41:23	political 23:7 32:12 46:15	predetermin... 72:19	40:16 41:16
pay 80:16,23	period 63:12 97:7	50:3 75:3	99:8	predominant 77:4	50:12,12
paycheck 34:10	permit 55:9	83:11 89:2 95:16	politicians 73:9 90:7	predomina... 44:17 46:13	61:1,2
PDNA 31:1 58:6	perpetuate 24:24	plan 5:18 13:22 14:1	politicking 82:14	46:14 52:7	83:20 85:9
peaches 84:12	Pershing 67:14	18:23 21:6	politics 82:11 82:13	80:19	92:21 100:9
Pearl 90:20	person 93:21	21:18 23:6	poor 52:24 55:12 70:10	preference 15:19 37:15	Printers 57:13
people 13:1,2 19:9,18	personal 96:24	37:10 38:18	pop 77:7	prejudice 33:10 41:7	prior 14:9
25:24 26:2	personally 56:12	40:8,13	population 24:9 56:8	51:19 60:17	priorities 99:5
26:16 30:4	perspective 45:10 73:17	57:3 69:14	56:24 71:22	prejudiced 60:18	privately 66:9
34:22 35:4	perspectives 7:15 64:19	71:3,17	72:5 93:15	prepare 30:9	privilege 72:22
42:23 45:2	pervasive 54:2	80:5 81:24	97:13	preparing 85:2	privileged 55:11
46:5,22	phase 9:21 11:10,20	83:10 88:20	position 34:8	Presbyterian 1:6	probably 62:15
47:19,20,21	phaseout 12:6	94:4,23	positive 17:16 74:5	presence 98:10	problem 95:22 98:20
49:1,3	phasing 9:21	96:18,20,20	possibly 39:8 84:20	present 5:5 16:3 59:11	procedure 81:19
50:16,18	Phillips 41:9	planned 37:9	post 89:16	100:6	Proceed 86:4
51:8,9,11		planners 90:7	posted 41:4		proceedings
57:22 58:2		plans 22:19 40:9			
63:3,15		please 5:1,17 16:16,18,22			
64:18 66:16		23:4 30:12			
69:3 70:4		36:19 47:6 55:22 66:19			

100:13	proper 70:10	39:21 54:4	quietly 48:2	34:19 51:18	Reese 57:4
101:7,11	proposal 3:15	64:1,1 69:7	quote 41:2	really 21:4,4	refer 11:8
process 6:2	3:19 4:24	69:21 70:22	69:4 70:6	36:3 42:14	48:19
31:16 66:21	6:22,24	80:2 86:11	quoted 74:8	43:12 55:22	reference
68:20 71:2	7:21 8:3,6	96:18,22	quoting	56:6 66:11	5:17 27:12
84:19 89:7	8:10,16 9:1	100:1,3	59:18	66:12 71:1	reflect 75:4,5
89:24	9:3 13:2	publicly		76:8 80:3	75:6
Product 69:6	15:5 17:13	27:24 37:1	R	99:6,14	reflects 44:9
professional	23:23 39:1	published	race 33:18	rear 73:16	regain 80:2
14:24 47:10	39:3,8	53:14	44:10	reason 18:21	regarding
47:11	44:15,21	publishing	racial 29:2	48:12 61:21	5:18 6:1
proficiency	60:4,10	6:2	32:16,19	77:8	15:14,15
54:9,12,13	69:12 72:7	pull 32:24	37:23 38:5	reasonable	regardless
54:15	74:3 90:4,5	52:10 89:23	38:8,11	15:16	8:23 9:13
profit 77:10	94:16,21	puppet 23:23	54:1,6 59:3	reasoning	10:20 15:6
profound	96:3	purpose 3:17	72:12,14	42:12	57:7
88:15	proposed 1:3	18:1 44:18	77:10 87:3	reassigned	regional 11:6
profoundly	3:6,8 5:9	purposely	racism 43:17	9:8 10:19	register 90:17
64:10	6:1,4,16,19	23:14 24:13	48:19,21	11:13	99:9
program 4:18	8:7 14:9	26:23 59:3	51:18,19	reassignment	registration
9:5 10:10	71:16	push 78:3	58:4	1:3 3:6	5:15
10:13 11:7	prosperous	pushed 24:4	racist 34:24	rebuild 80:2	regular 20:23
11:10,13,19	52:9	38:12 60:1	57:18,19	receive 15:23	rehab 97:4
20:19 24:16	protect 26:11	pushing 29:4	63:10	received 7:12	relationships
27:17 28:12	proud 17:20	40:11	Rahm 39:11	70:2 88:1	45:22 88:15
54:3,6	30:13 40:21	put 19:1	79:15	receiving	releasing
55:21,23	45:6 51:16	21:23 36:10	raise 16:2	31:4	7:24
56:15 71:6	provide 5:9	80:5 83:10	raised 22:12	recognize	relied 27:3
71:23 88:12	5:17 8:21	83:11	43:15	13:15 55:19	religion 50:9
programmi...	14:19 44:3	putting 77:22	range 84:17	recommen...	religions
93:17	47:10 53:10	85:9	rating 45:13	6:15,18	51:12
programs	75:9	Q	ratings 67:16	record 5:5	remain 8:20
14:17	provided	quality 66:5	reach 71:23	21:23 23:19	11:20
progress	37:13	87:6 88:6,9	reached	27:8 28:15	remarks
43:20 54:17	provides	QUE 32:15	27:22 74:13	32:3 38:24	16:17
promise	44:15 64:21	72:12	reading 3:20	47:1 59:13	remember
26:17	providing	question	71:12	68:21 73:8	35:21
promised	44:18	38:23	ready 92:3	recorded 5:3	remove 23:10
96:23 97:4	public 1:1 2:1	questions	real 40:13	recording	removing
promoting	4:1,12 5:5	4:23 99:18	reality 30:20	14:20	23:12
35:9	5:10 6:9,11	quick 26:16	78:22	Red 18:9	reneged 36:1
promptly 4:3	16:10,13	95:18	realize 52:8	redevelop	replace 20:3
pronounce	18:11 22:5	quiet 51:1,2	59:23 65:12	97:21	replacement
46:4	28:7,15	99:13	73:7 98:21	redevelop...	96:22
proof 31:9	34:7,15		realized	22:19 97:23	report 16:4

reported 101:7	78:24 79:6	80:5 91:5,5	84:6	32:1,4,7,7	80:6,12,13
reporter 101:5	respectfully 48:5,6	92:13,24	satisfy 24:19	32:11 33:2	80:16,20,21
represent 60:23	responded 27:11	94:13	Saturday 69:23 70:3	33:10,11,12	80:22,23
representat... 27:7	response 7:21	rights 76:22	save 63:2	33:21,22	81:2,8
representat... 4:15 7:6	responsibili... 70:13	rigor 89:20	saying 33:20	36:7,11,11	82:10,18,23
14:13 72:15	restorative 14:23 71:5	rising 9:7	35:5 48:24	36:16 37:2	83:1,24
represented 4:20 86:3	result 37:4	10:13,18	52:19 60:11	37:8,14,21	86:15,17
98:2	resulted 96:21	11:1,12	61:4 73:3	38:14,17,19	87:5,8,9,12
represents 45:18	retain 71:24	road 36:9,9	74:8	38:22 39:1	87:13,21
request 39:1	retired 91:24	Rodriguez 2:5 4:17	says 40:7	39:9,14,16	88:18 89:5
39:8	return 23:16	role 24:23	74:4 101:5	39:18 40:2	89:11,14,17
required 75:19	93:6	roles 24:21	scheduled 31:22	40:8,19,24	90:22 91:1
research 53:22	Reverend 4:5	room 35:9	scholars 17:21 30:14	41:10,21,22	91:3 92:3
resident 29:23 36:23	review 6:13	43:19 47:19	school 5:18	41:24 42:16	93:12,19,21
56:1 65:5	rewatched 65:13	47:20 49:3	6:3,4 7:16	44:7,19	94:4,5,7,8
69:6 86:6	RGC 11:8,10	65:23 66:15	7:18 8:8,9	45:11,16,21	94:12,16
residents 22:11 44:10	11:12,13,19	70:14 90:18	8:15,17,22	46:8,12,21	95:8,10,11
71:13 97:1	45:12 88:12	rooted 70:6	9:2,9,13,15	46:22 48:8	95:12,19
97:2	rhetoric 93:13	rough 92:19	9:17,21,22	48:15 49:14	97:14,17,20
residing 13:11	rhetorically 75:23	round 18:16	9:23 10:1,2	49:15 50:3	97:24 98:3
resolve 39:14	rich 55:11	26:4	10:5 11:5	50:15 51:10	school's 52:14
resources 55:10 88:7	ridden 18:4	Row 57:13	11:23 12:1	51:21,22,23	school-based 14:16
respect 13:5	ride 96:8	rowdy 47:22	12:5,6,8	52:4,7 54:3	schooler 18:19
16:14 35:3	ridiculous 77:17	rules 25:9	13:14 14:3	54:24 55:4	schools 1:1
79:7,9,11	right 25:23	48:13,14,16	14:18 15:1	56:5,11,19	2:1 10:22
92:13,14	26:11 30:5	55:15	15:3,5,7,8,9	57:12 58:1	11:15 16:13
respectful 4:12 17:6	30:10 31:2	rumor 40:1	15:16 18:14	58:8,15,19	22:5,17
47:23 48:1	40:22 46:5	run 3:21 66:9	19:10,10,11	59:7 60:24	24:6 28:10
48:4,9 49:1	49:7 57:6	93:10	19:13,15,16	61:3,9,14	28:15 29:8
50:23 51:1	60:4,11,18	running 82:8	19:18,19,21	61:22 62:9	34:8,15,17
51:2 72:16	62:1,2,20	runs 55:20	21:7,16	62:14,15,16	36:22 37:5
	63:1 64:2	rush 18:17	22:9 23:13	62:21,23	37:6,11,22
	65:21 67:13		23:20,21	63:12,24	37:24 38:8
	68:5,8,9	S	24:8 25:5	64:5,20,23	38:10 39:21
	77:7,14	sad 42:14	26:1,4,5,8	65:7 66:4	41:24 44:16
	78:6 79:23	95:13	26:12,13	67:12,12	52:12,18,24
		safety 10:6	27:5,10,14	68:16,23	53:2 55:2
		sake 16:13	27:14,15	69:7,16	62:18 63:2
		salaries 76:14	29:7,10,13	71:16,24	64:2 66:1,9
		Sanders 20:5	29:19,19	72:10 73:6	66:10,13
		20:5 30:13	30:17,22	73:19 74:1	67:16,17
		30:13	31:12,13,16	74:16,17,23	69:1 77:4
		Sarah 70:20		75:15 77:13	
		sat 65:11		77:20 78:4	
				78:19 79:5	

86:10,11 94:2 95:17 schools' 14:21 Schurz 38:4 science 88:19 91:18 scores 45:12 87:14 search 56:16 seat 8:21 9:13 15:7 19:2 seats 29:18 41:19 68:23 77:5 second 1:6 6:9 17:19 20:10,20 23:18 26:19 28:6 33:7 43:2,2 61:1 88:11 seconds 15:23 78:21 section 16:11 36:2 security 10:7 84:17 see 9:18 15:13 16:1 37:21 48:10 49:6 51:11 51:12 52:10 53:5 55:23 57:21 66:11 66:24,24 73:13 84:13 84:15,20 85:1,5,8,12 85:17,19,21 89:18 91:7 seeing 27:16 27:17 79:2 seen 3:23 78:3,4 84:8	89:22 90:12 95:20 segregated 54:3 segregating 23:14 segregation 73:15 74:8 77:3 select 56:19 selected 41:23 selection 17:17 22:20 selective 28:9 41:24 83:1 sell 32:21,21 seminar 85:2 send 66:8 69:3 95:19 99:19 Senn 38:1 sense 15:11 29:18 83:12 sensitive 31:13 sent 39:24 57:23 sentence 63:15 sequence 12:4 serve 44:7 55:3,6 62:19 72:9 served 53:12 54:23 72:4 serves 44:18 74:16 93:17 service 4:10 81:22,23 82:1 services 2:4,5 4:16 64:1 87:22 93:15	set 15:17 seven 44:16 70:4 shake 48:11 shame 94:24 Shani 2:3 4:16 Shantel 95:3 share 3:13 45:9 shared 54:2 86:9 Shelton 40:4 91:10,11 100:10 Shiu 62:7,7 Shmitt 23:17 23:17 Shore 59:5 short 87:1 shorthand 101:7,10 shouting 13:7 13:19 16:5 16:19 58:5 58:13 showed 50:13 81:1 shower 92:2 showing 33:15 68:14 shows 15:16 27:19 53:19 54:17 shrinks 71:22 shuffling 29:1 shut 29:15 33:20,21,23 shuttling 29:8 siblings 21:9 sick 48:20 side 8:10 16:24 26:6	29:5 38:1,5 57:7 68:22 70:8 97:3 sides 34:5 significant 54:6 significantly 85:7 silent 83:21 Simon 62:7 simply 86:7 single 18:5,11 83:22 91:21 92:19 sinks 78:22 sister 21:12 sister's 21:9 sit 83:1,23 site 97:21 sites 96:8 sitting 65:20 84:4,5 situation 22:1,2 situations 2:7 4:18 64:9 64:16 six 16:22 18:20 35:13 sixth 33:4 skin 50:10 83:8 slide 15:13 slides 8:24 slots 56:20 slow 92:2 small 55:10 85:9 small-group 7:11 social 89:9 90:2 society 69:21 76:9 society's 75:5	socioecono... 44:10 solely 27:23 solid 88:15 89:2,3 solidified solution 56:9 solutions 56:16 somebody 76:11 someone's 18:19 son 17:21 18:23 19:23 41:21 song 48:23 soon 67:7 90:21 94:14 95:24 sorry 5:13 10:15 79:8 sort 98:23 sounds 39:19 south 1:3,7 7:2,5,22 8:11,12,13 8:18,21 9:5 9:6,8,11 10:10,16,19 11:3,4,9,11 11:13,22 12:1,10,13 12:18,21 13:13,17,21 14:2,14 15:3 17:13 18:8 19:1 21:12 22:8 22:11,14,23 24:5 26:20 32:5,21 34:2 38:20 39:15,15 40:4,23	41:20 43:15 53:9 54:7 54:17 55:4 56:1,23 57:23 59:16 59:19,24 62:5 67:24 68:22 71:14 72:8 73:18 74:1 80:11 81:20 82:9 83:7 90:23 93:22,23 94:4 100:10 Spanish 62:11 speak 15:22 16:23 17:2 17:24 29:11 41:9 44:2 45:8 49:6 50:20 55:18 63:16 69:19 83:24 89:1 90:16 95:5 99:15 speaker 15:10 17:8 17:19,20 25:18 27:12 33:24 49:22 57:19 58:24 59:1 60:19 66:20 79:3 80:8 81:14 85:13,22 86:4 88:10 90:15,19 91:8 93:3 speakers 16:15,16,18 16:20 17:4 17:7 30:11 30:12 36:18 36:19 47:5
--	--	---	--	--	--

53:6,7	standard	stemming	9:10,12,19	suburbs	16:21 25:23
66:18,19	25:10 92:5	23:7	9:24 10:9	95:16 96:6	26:10,14
78:8,9	92:15	stenographer	10:12,13,19	success 24:7	42:20 43:9
83:17,18	standards	5:4 16:3	10:23 11:2	71:24	50:2,2,3,15
86:21,22,23	66:10	Step 20:20	11:6,12,17	successful	52:24 56:3
90:18	standing	stepping	12:5,12,20	25:4 93:19	58:20 66:12
speaking	78:22	63:22	12:23 13:9	suggested	67:10 68:13
17:10 29:21	stands 8:3	STLS 4:18	13:11,17	95:7	74:9 83:6
63:14	Stanford	stop 25:3	14:2 15:2,5	suited 42:1	85:20 88:19
specific 3:15	53:17,23	50:14 61:6	15:18 24:15	summaries	91:2,2 92:2
3:19 4:23	start 3:20	80:4 82:4	25:11 27:3	5:20	95:10,11
10:9 32:8	36:8 41:1	stops 18:9	27:15,17	summer	taken 26:18
94:1	68:12,14	stories 18:18	28:4 34:5	78:13 96:7	51:21 85:18
specifically	started 15:21	story 32:14	35:13 36:14	96:7 97:6	101:10
31:6	22:17 42:2	stranger 3:2	37:2,4,7,12	super 20:12	takes 87:11
speech 30:15	51:10 65:19	streams 89:4	37:14,22	42:4	Talent 2:8
76:20	70:5 96:19	street 18:8	42:3,8	superinten...	4:19
split 21:11	starting 9:15	40:23 63:8	44:16 45:18	77:2	talk 19:17
splitting 19:6	10:9 14:9	80:18,19	45:20,22	support 14:1	27:13 30:16
71:19	31:15 58:8	strengthened	51:16 53:15	14:7,19	36:24 42:15
spoke 50:1	starts 67:6	89:10	53:16 54:8	38:18 39:13	48:18 59:9
65:5,16	68:3	strive 29:6	54:10,13,14	50:8 87:18	64:17 84:21
71:15	state 7:6 68:8	44:5	54:18,21	supports 2:4	84:21 87:4
spoken 22:6	75:19 90:7	strong 7:19	55:3,4,5,7	2:5 4:16	talked 30:18
sponsored	101:1	43:17	62:22 67:5	14:21 93:18	84:7
31:1	state-of-the...	stronger 98:4	71:10 73:5	supposed 8:7	talking 50:24
Square 7:4	8:11	structure	77:6 80:7	sure 40:10	59:19 61:6
38:14,20	stated 23:20	56:5 57:15	85:5,6,9	43:19 67:2	64:11 79:21
43:22	27:13 28:7	struggles	88:23 89:19	70:16 73:8	80:1
SS 101:1	statement	70:9	93:18,20,23	SURP 27:19	Tara 100:9
stability 90:3	37:20	stuck 89:14	94:3,8 95:4	sustenance	tardy 18:11
staff 5:16	statements	student 14:13	students'	75:10	Tatiana
7:19 10:22	24:21 28:14	20:5 25:13	54:17	sway 28:3	28:21
11:16 14:13	states 24:16	27:11 33:3	study 53:17	sworn 101:5	taught 34:14
15:1 29:16	73:13	38:2 42:18	63:2	sympathetic	Taylor 2:8
45:24 50:11	statistics 68:3	42:19 44:9	stuff 61:23	98:15	4:20
71:7 87:18	status 27:12	47:2 49:23	style 42:1	system 55:10	teach 43:3,4
88:16 95:21	33:12 45:11	51:6 54:1	submit 5:14	55:13,14,16	58:11 68:10
stakeholder	stay 9:11	56:8 60:20	39:4	69:7,21	87:23
73:23	11:2 18:24	61:18 62:22	submitted		teacher 25:15
stakeholders	21:12 71:21	63:20 71:6	39:3	T	34:16 47:13
7:12	88:3 98:24	71:19 84:14	subsequent	table 44:21	61:1,2,2
stand 46:16	steal 20:2	students 2:6	9:20 11:5,9	70:8	84:17 91:17
69:9 73:3	steering 7:9	4:17 8:19	substitute	tables 5:2	teachers 1:4
83:23 84:1	13:22 54:16	8:22 9:6,7	34:16	take 5:7 8:2	3:7 20:12

20:16 21:4	44:10 68:24	things 20:17	tied 76:13	tonight 55:20	treating
27:2 29:16	73:4 96:17	20:23 25:20	TIF 80:14,17	86:3 98:2	79:10
33:19 34:9	terrible 32:14	26:16 29:4	80:18 81:8	tonight's 5:6	treatment
34:11,12	terribly 94:5	42:24 87:11	81:11	tool 72:13	96:2
39:16 43:1	test 34:13	93:14 99:5	Tiffany 2:8	top 29:17	trenches
46:2 60:22	87:14	think 21:6	4:20	tour 79:19	89:23
60:23 71:7	testimony	24:17 29:24	Tillman 81:5	track 11:3,22	tried 48:12
71:11 72:1	46:24	35:2 42:5	time 4:1 8:2	traffic 89:15	67:14
78:11 87:16	text 89:4	42:14 43:10	8:14,17	train 96:8	tries 29:14
87:18,24	texts 85:3	46:11 49:24	9:17 11:21	training 15:1	trip 18:16
88:2 89:19	thank 12:16	50:16,17	12:3,4	trains 18:5	26:4 96:7
92:8,22	13:5 16:9	51:3 58:3	17:23 26:12	transcript	trips 89:5
93:16	17:5,18	58:19 61:4	31:13 39:22	101:9	troubling
teaching	20:3 23:16	63:22 64:16	40:14 56:15	transfer 8:20	27:1
34:18 42:7	25:15 28:19	65:21,21	56:19 57:11	9:9 10:21	true 27:18
47:16	33:23 35:12	68:7 73:15	59:23 63:14	11:3,4,14	32:8 92:9
team 14:12	35:16 40:19	82:12 91:4	69:16 70:24	11:22	101:9
53:23 87:17	45:4 47:4	93:7 99:11	73:19 77:2	transferring	truly 75:8
tearing 21:16	49:18,20	99:12	77:12 84:11	15:2	trust 80:2
tears 71:18	51:14 53:6	thinking 63:1	85:18,21	transfers	trustworthy
technology	55:16 57:16	63:23	91:21 92:4	14:20	28:19 89:7
42:6	62:6 63:13	third 17:21	95:10,17	transforma...	89:8
Ted 93:4	63:16 66:17	33:5	timekeepers	96:18	truth 32:23
teenagers	72:23 73:1	Thompson	16:1,2	transition	46:11 77:24
82:21	74:23 76:6	86:1 100:7	timeline 6:1	5:18 9:4,11	try 16:14
tell 32:13	76:7,17,18	thought 56:3	9:3	10:8 12:5	63:15 83:8
33:9 35:6	81:13,14	65:14,19	times 20:14	13:22 14:2	90:10,11
46:20 63:9	85:15 88:9	96:10	22:6 53:14	14:16	95:8,10
68:4 69:11	90:14,19	threaten 35:4	53:22 67:21	transitioning	98:16,17,18
92:12 95:17	93:2 96:13	three 7:7	Tina 31:1	8:18 55:3	trying 42:20
telling 35:21	99:17	19:6 21:14	today 3:12	transitions	43:8,9 49:7
51:1 68:12	100:11	36:21 38:5	4:14 8:3	10:5 12:10	50:21 56:7
78:23,23	thankful	67:8,21	17:14 50:13	12:18 14:5	57:22 61:9
Temporary	25:15	68:4 90:18	65:14 69:10	transitions...	73:14 84:18
2:6 4:17	Thanks 21:19	95:4	69:21 73:8	5:14 7:13	99:12
ten 16:22,22	40:7 94:24	three-and-...	77:9 95:6	99:20	turn 32:11
17:7 57:1	thing 20:24	40:22	Toerne 93:4	transportat...	40:8 79:21
62:3 63:9	32:13,18	three-camp...	93:4	15:2 18:12	82:15
ten-year	35:22 43:12	8:12	told 71:4	57:3	turned 40:2
96:20	47:18 49:7	three-year	41:7	travel 18:14	61:22 80:13
Teneka 83:20	52:3 61:7	53:24	Tomorrow	18:19 26:9	turning 30:17
tension 87:3	62:12 63:5	thrive 86:18	49:17	26:9 69:19	31:11,12
tensions 29:3	63:6,7,11	86:19	tone 35:2	traveled 26:3	34:22
terms 8:6 9:2	76:23 86:8	thriving	58:3	59:5	tutoring
10:8 11:24	97:10	87:19 93:20		treat 68:12	55:20,23

TV 53:5	46:7 56:17	various 6:22	41:9 43:3	47:8 55:13	38:4 41:5
two 5:8 6:8	67:4 75:8	6:24 7:12	45:9,16	72:11,20	53:19,24
8:8 14:3	76:5	7:15,21	46:24 48:18	91:9	54:14 55:3
15:22 17:21	understand...	Veronica	50:21 51:6	we'll 17:4	62:11 77:4
18:4 21:8	48:20	23:17	55:18,22	89:1 94:13	77:4
21:10,21	understands	version 27:20	58:1,22	we're 17:1,6	whys 91:20
26:15 27:9	67:3	viable 32:1	61:5,5,8	56:18 57:6	Williams
28:21,22	unelected	41:21 44:20	66:23 67:2	61:9 64:15	29:20,21
29:7 30:14	63:24	videos 89:18	67:4,10	65:19,21,21	49:23,24
32:3 35:14	unfamiliar	view 45:10	68:10,11,14	77:14 78:1	51:6
38:11 47:15	26:16	51:18 96:8	68:20 69:11	78:22 79:2	willing 24:21
47:18 52:22	unfortunat...	viewed 96:5	69:17,18	81:9 96:19	27:4 28:3
53:1 62:18	36:1 38:15	viewpoints	73:1,7,8	we've 21:24	60:15 87:15
62:18 63:1	94:22	72:16	76:14 80:24	22:1 41:15	Willis 88:11
63:13 67:21	UNIDENT...	Village 93:5	81:10 82:5	58:6 71:2,4	Wilson 17:9
69:7 70:21	15:10 17:20	violate 25:8	82:16,17,17	78:3,4 82:6	17:10
77:22 78:5	25:18 33:24	violence 35:9	82:18 90:16	84:6,7	winners
78:21 87:11	57:19 59:1	voice 51:2	91:6,20,22	98:17	69:13
93:14	66:20 88:10	61:8	92:4 98:12	wealthy 23:9	wise 99:2
two-minute	unique 38:19	voices 72:22	98:21 99:13	website 5:19	wish 10:24
15:24	unit 89:11	volunteer	wanted 4:9	99:21	11:18
two-year-y...	United 32:15	41:11 98:22	19:24 21:23	Wednesday	woman 41:3
19:2	units 22:22	volunteering	35:17 37:19	70:3	87:1
types 45:2	96:22	42:2	41:1 86:20	week 3:23	women 69:8
typically 54:4	universal	vote 6:15,18	98:8	6:21 41:4	wonderful
	56:6	64:5,22	wanting 70:5	55:24 65:10	41:3 42:4
U	University	76:8 99:9	80:1 82:23	66:3 72:11	62:17 97:19
ugly 73:16	47:14,18	votes 28:3	wants 42:15	79:20 93:9	wonderfully
uh-uh 92:10	53:17,23	vulnerable	61:7 75:7	week's 65:6	93:18
ultimately	93:5	68:7	80:3 91:23	78:14	wondering
13:24 99:13	unjust 30:5		93:22	weekly 89:18	40:1
UN 98:6	uplift 64:21	W	ward 7:2	welcome 4:7	Woo-woo
unacceptable	upper 44:5	waiting 50:23	28:22 40:11	74:21,22	27:23
54:15	upset 84:14	walk 59:4	44:13 67:14	80:22	WOODMAN
unaware 60:2	urban 90:7	61:13,16,17	81:7 86:2	well-being	101:4
60:12	urgent 23:3	62:4 84:8,9	87:8 100:7	75:11	WOODM...
undemocra...	use 17:1 36:5	84:11,13,24	100:8	went 26:7	101:15
64:10	58:18	85:4,7,18	wasn't 34:19	31:6 34:11	wool 89:23
under-utili...	uses 42:5	92:19	35:18 52:21	34:16 95:18	work 22:16
69:2		want 4:8 7:18	watch 92:20	97:13	31:6 33:15
undergrad...	V	8:2 13:1	92:21,21	west 26:6	44:3 48:8
47:14	valid 68:24	22:17 26:20	watched 56:2	56:21 61:1	52:22 63:7
understand	value 43:11	32:18 33:9	Watkins	100:2	64:14 68:15
12:24,24	VAN 26:15	33:17,21	72:24,24	WGN 28:6	85:19 90:10
20:17 32:18	variety 14:6	34:4 39:7	way 43:4,5	white 37:17	90:13 92:10

93:1 96:1	11:5,10,23	12,000 48:14	2017 7:9 60:6	11:8 12:9	36:2 54:7,9
97:1 98:7	21:10 37:3	1200 62:21	68:22 73:12	12:11,17,19	8's 13:10
99:14	40:19 43:16	13 18:14,14	2018 1:5	20:6 86:2	8:00 4:3,4
worked 7:20	43:19 56:2	14 90:15	31:17	100:8	100:14
92:7	57:7 67:8	14th 23:5	2018-19 15:6	<hr/> 4 <hr/>	8:30 100:1,4
working	68:4 82:24	15 30:11,12	2019-20 8:8	4 8:19 9:10	80 48:16
70:23 71:11	83:3 90:12	37:17	9:4,15,19	9:19 11:19	87 44:13
85:6 99:6	94:13 96:20	1500 68:23	10:9 11:23	12:22 13:8	8th 8:20 9:10
works 40:9	96:23 97:9	16 1:5 36:18	12:9	13:9,12	11:1
55:13 89:22	yesterday	36:19	2022-23 9:23	40 38:7	<hr/> 9 <hr/>
90:12	47:24 76:21	17 97:8	2024 10:1	41 38:10	9 9:19 10:2
workshop	York 53:14	18 96:20,23	21 37:16 47:5	42 78:8,9	900 7:12
88:24	53:21	97:8	47:6 68:22	100:2	93 44:12
worship 4:10	young 26:14	19 37:16	21-year-old	43 83:17,18	98 57:24
worth 63:22	65:16 69:8	1936 1:7	36:4	4400 57:12	99 96:19
wouldn't	70:11 86:9	1990 62:1	22nd 80:18	46 37:23	
19:2 34:7	younger 21:9	1998 80:14	23 56:2	47 83:17,18	
35:1 77:5	youth 26:10	80:14	240 54:10	48 86:21,22	
wrap 49:16	26:11	1999 34:4	25 10:1 47:5	4th 11:1	
wreak 64:24	<hr/> Z <hr/>	1st 3:8,9 6:4	47:6	61:19	
writes 39:12	zone 18:24	6:5 9:7	26 18:16 26:4	<hr/> 5 <hr/>	
written 5:15	zoned 10:16	10:18	69:19	50 33:1 37:3	
wrong 21:7	<hr/> 0 <hr/>	<hr/> 2 <hr/>	27 37:15 53:6	37:5	
29:9 60:4,5	084.002740	2 1:3 19:11	53:7	56 86:21,22	
60:11 63:16	101:16	2 1:3 19:11	29th 35:1	<hr/> 6 <hr/>	
65:21 91:13	<hr/> 1 <hr/>	2/5/2017	99:24 100:4	6 54:14,14	
94:4	1	59:10	2nd 73:12	6:00 1:5	
wrote 39:10	1 24:15 25:5	20 36:18,19	81:7	100:1,4	
Wu 36:20,20	25:5 27:12	43:15 90:11	<hr/> 3 <hr/>	6:30 92:1	
www.cps.e...	27:22 29:10	2000-2010	3 8:18 81:24	60 54:11,12	
99:22	29:13 33:12	56:24	83:10,11,13	54:12	
<hr/> X <hr/>	45:11,16	2001 97:5	3.5 14:1	670 22:22	
<hr/> Y <hr/>	87:12,13	2005 24:5	30 4:21 7:11	<hr/> 7 <hr/>	
Yeah 57:20	1.4 77:15	59:15 60:12	15:23 33:1	7 9:24 54:18	
year 8:8 9:15	10 37:17 38:1	60:18	300 22:11	54:19	
9:23 10:1	38:2,3,3,6,9	2010 78:5	62:22	75 24:8 55:1	
11:23 12:8	38:11 54:8	2010-2012	32 53:7,7	750 18:21	
14:9 15:5	54:9,18,20	57:1	33 44:13	7th-8th 42:19	
26:22 27:22	10,000 57:2	2011 58:8	66:18,19	<hr/> 8 <hr/>	
36:9 38:12	109th 63:8	2013 24:6	37 66:18,19	8 11:20 12:23	
60:6,6 63:9	11 30:11,12	67:13 79:4	37th 18:8	13:9,12	
67:6 68:3	1100 22:22	2015 23:6	38 78:8,9		
years 9:20	11th 100:7	27:19 30:22	39th 80:18		
	12 9:24 10:3	39:10 60:8	3rd 9:7 10:18		
		2016 31:6,9			